

# THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER



An Explanation of This Letter  
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

ROCK  
SOLID  
10



# **The First Letter of Peter**



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Rock Solid #10 (Part II)

Ger de Koning

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Cover design: Jan Paul Spoor

Layout: Jan Noordhoek

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## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

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### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

### **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## The First Letter of Peter

### **Introduction**

After the many letters of Paul and the one letter of James you now have a letter of another writer before you. The writer is the apostle Peter. Of all the disciples who traveled through Israel with the Lord Jesus, he is the one about whom the most is written in the four Gospels. He has also received from the Lord the special task to strengthen and encourage his brothers. These are in the first place his Jewish fellow believers. Peter receives the apostleship to the circumcised, i.e. the Jews (Gal 2:7). By the writing of his two letters Peter fulfills the order of the Lord: “Strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:32b).

To be able to fulfill this ministry he had to be educated and shaped. For that purpose God also used satan. Satan demanded permission from God to sift the disciples like wheat (Lk 22:31). He got God’s permission to do that, whereby as with all temptations, God determines the limits. In that way satan had been an instrument in God’s hand to carry out His plans with Peter. The painful experience Peter had to undergo – he denied his Lord – was used by the Lord to make him fit for the ministry He had for him. The Lord made sure by His prayer that Peter’s faith may not fail (Lk 22:32a). The evidence of this are his letters.

Peter has learnt a lot from his fall and restoration. He knows from own experience that satan is a terrible enemy and he knows God’s restoring hand that leads out of the depth. His failure reminds him of how great the grace and faithfulness of God are. That is also the way he concludes his letter. As a kind of conclusion he says to his readers “that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it” (1Pet 5:12). His whole letter testifies to that grace. What God wants to teach you with the grace He shows, is that you may subject yourself to His will. That was the case with Peter.

After Peter’s restoration in the midst of the other disciples, he receives from the Lord his threefold task (Jn 21:15-17). The lambs and sheep the Lord entrusts to him He emphatically calls: “My lambs” and “My sheep”.

It refers to the lambs and the sheep of the fold of Israel. The Lord knew about what His sheep would have to fear from the unbelieving Israelites. That's why He entrusted them to Peter, who had gone astray like a lost sheep himself, but has returned (Psa 119:176).

Peter calls the sheep that the Lord entrusts to him "those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout ..." (1Pet 1:1). Scattering is a judgment of God because of the unfaithfulness of His people. At the same time the grace of God had taken care of them, for the promises of the Old Testament were made to them. They returned, not to the land, but to "the Shepherd and Guardian" of their souls (1Pet 2:25). Peter can help and guide his brothers, who came from a people that just as he had denied the Lord (Acts 3:13) and who now live outside of Israel.

Just like the other apostles Peter also has a special subject that characterizes his letters. Paul often presents the believers as members of the church, which means as members of the body of Christ. John sees the believers as members of the family of God. Peter can be called the apostle of the kingdom of God. 'The kingdom of God' is the great subject of both of his letters, although the expression itself does not appear in them. That is, he views and addresses the believers as subjects in the kingdom of God.

Paul also has spoken about the kingdom of God, but Peter is the one who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 16:16-19). (Just for the sake of clarity: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same, but with a different accent.) He used the keys in the book of Acts in order to open the door of the kingdom successively for the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10).

In that way Peter has not been made the head of the church or the gate keeper of heaven. The kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God is a kingdom on earth. But what is that kingdom? When you think of a kingdom you think of a king and subjects. The kingdom of *God* is the kingdom that is ruled by *God*. He rules over everything that is His; that is the universe with everything that belongs to it.

You cannot see that yet, but it is the purpose of God to soon put everything under the feet of the Son of Man. What you do see is that the Lord Jesus has already been crowned as King (Heb 2:8-9). In the Old Testament the

kingdom of God is something to come, for it is related to the coming of the King, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus (Dan 7:13-14). The Lord Jesus is the Heir of all things. But when He came to earth He was rejected. Therefore the kingdom in its announced form, in which the Messiah will publicly reign, has been delayed for an indefinite time.

Nevertheless the kingdom exists, but in a special form. This form is unexpected and is not announced by the prophets. The particular thing about it is that the kingdom is not public, but hidden. Therefore, the Lord Jesus speaks about the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:11). It is a hidden realm because the King of that realm is hidden. The subjects, those who confess the Lord Jesus as Lord, are not hidden, but He, to Whom they subject themselves, is.

The world doesn't see the living Lord of Whom the Christians are subjects, for the world has rejected and crucified Him. The world is not subjected yet. The world is still hostile and now turns against the believers as it once did against the Lord Jesus. Peter is focusing the eyes of the readers on the glorified Lord and on the future, when He will appear to reward the ones who are His – and to judge His enemies, but he will write about that in his second letter.

Another theme is the suffering of the believer because of his identification with the rejected Lord. Suffering is presented in such a way that you can conclude that it is a suffering in imitation of Christ. Thereby you can discern different kinds that you encounter in this letter:

1. Suffering as a test of faith (1Pet 1:6-7);
2. suffering for the sake of conscience (1Pet 2:19);
3. suffering for the sake of righteousness (1Pet 3:14);
4. suffering for the sake of Christ and for His Name's sake (1Pet 4:13-14);
5. suffering from the side of satan (1Pet 5:8-9).

As the prophets already announced, suffering is an intermediate step toward glory. Just as the Lord Jesus came to glory through suffering, so do you. Therefore you are pointed to the inheritance that lies before you. The glory in this letter is not the Father's house, but that you will be sharing

Christ's glory in the kingdom. As you suffer with the Rejected One now, you will soon reign with the glorified Christ after His return.

To understand the letter well, you should always consider that it is addressed to Jewish Christians. They know the Old Testament, they are looking forward to the kingdom and the glory of the Messiah and His government; they know about the judgment on the enemies. Now they believe in a Messiah Who they cannot see, while the wicked ones of the people have not been judged. On the contrary, both the wicked Jews and the Gentiles cause the Jewish Christians to suffer. Everything is so much different than what they have believed from their childhood. They are mocked with why their Messiah does not give salvation. Then their faith may begin to falter.

You are not in the same position, but there are many similarities between your position and that of them. It can also be hard for you to continue to trust in an invisible Lord. That trust in the invisible Lord can also result in different forms of suffering. It applies also to you that through this letter Peter focuses your heart on Him Whom you have come to love, though you do not see Him now.

## 1 Peter 1

### **1Pet 1:1-2 | Blessing**

*1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

V1. “Peter” presents himself as the sender of the letter to his readers. He calls himself by the name that the Lord has given to him (Jn 1:42). Then he makes it clear that he writes as “an apostle of Jesus Christ”. In that way his letter has authority. It doesn’t mean that he addresses them from an exalted position, but to ensure his readers that this writing has great significance. An apostle is a representative who speaks or writes on behalf of another person. Therefore he does not write this letter out of courtesy, but it is a letter that he writes on behalf of Jesus Christ. In this letter he passes on the love of the Lord Jesus to His own.

The recipients are addressed as “aliens, scattered”. The readers, the believing Jews, are pilgrims in the areas to which they have been scattered by the persecution that had erupted because of Stephen (Acts 8:1,4; 11:19). ‘Aliens’ or ‘pilgrims’ find themselves in tough circumstances, far from their native country. The fact that they were ‘scattered’ implies that they were under the judgment of God. If they had remained faithful to what God had told them, they would have enjoyed God’s blessings in His land. That is out of the question now. Instead, they find themselves outside the promised land in strange countries.

You may say that these believers are pilgrims or strangers in two ways. They are to the Gentiles in the midst of whom they find themselves, while they are also that to their unbelieving compatriots through their faith in the Messiah.

Peter mentions the areas where the believing Jews were scattered. Those are the five provinces of the Roman empire that are in Asia Minor, in pres-



ent Turkey. It is the area where Paul has worked often, as you can read in the book of Acts. Although it cannot be said with certainty, it is much likely that many have come to faith through his service.

Related to their scattering is that they must endure suffering. Another reason why Peter writes his letter, is to encourage them in that suffering. He nowhere appeals to resist against that suffering or to rebel against it.

Also today the children of God are scattered everywhere and endure suffering. If you consistently follow the Lord Jesus you do not count in the world. You cannot find anywhere an appeal to unite yourself with other Christians to overthrow governments or even exert any political influence. Neither did the Lord Jesus do that.

In their relation to the world the believers are strangers who are scattered here and there; in their relation to God things are totally different. Listen to what Peter has to say about their relationship to God. That are great blessings for the believers. The world has no part in that, the world doesn't even know anything about it. Also the unbelieving Jews have no part in that. He is talking about "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (verse 2). He also talks about "sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ" (Darby Translation).

Here you see the triune God: God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. The triune God is the Source of all these great blessings and He works that its objects indeed partake of that too.

Let us briefly examine these blessings one by one. First that of being chosen. Being chosen sounds familiar to the pilgrims in the dispersion. They know that they, regarding their national origin, belong to God's chosen people. Only, that being chosen regards being chosen to be God's people on earth (Deu 7:6). Because the people had rejected the Lord Jesus, Israel has lost that place. When Israel will repent in the future, it will be God's people.

But at this time there is another being chosen, a higher, a heavenly one for the believers. The being chosen of a believer is destined for heaven and not for earth. Therefore the being chosen that Peter is talking about, stands opposite to the being chosen of God's earthly people.

V2. This being chosen happened “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”. The Father has, according to His perfect foreknowledge of all things, chosen certain people to be His property (Eph 1:4). With God foreknowledge implies more than only knowing all things in advance. Nothing will ever happen that He did not know in advance. However, His foreknowledge is not passive, but it makes Him act in a certain way, like here concerning His choice.

For you, who may know to be chosen, that is an enormous encouragement, for it gives you the absolute guarantee that your being chosen has been established to eternity. To Peter it is also, with respect to the readers of his letter, a definite matter (cf. 2Thes 2:13). God says: ‘You belong to Me.’ Who can reverse that? Who is greater and mightier than God? Therefore being chosen doesn’t depend on your efforts, but on the counsel of God the Father, Who executes what He plans to do (Rom 8:28-30). Peter will deal later in this chapter with the responsibilities that are also related to that.

If you look at being chosen you see the same concerning the following aspect that Peter calls the “sanctification of the Spirit”. ‘To sanctify’ means ‘to set apart’. God’s earthly people Israel was set apart from the nations that surrounded them, by all kinds of outward statutes. Thereby the law functioned as a dividing wall (Eph 2:14). Peter talks about ‘sanctification of the Spirit’. The heavenly people where these believers (and we) belong to, have been set apart for God by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has worked the new life in them, separated them from the world and from Israel and connected them to their Messiah Who is in heaven.

The same goes for the next aspect, that of “obedience”. As Jews they were indebted to obey the law, with the promise of life. To them as believers another obedience has replaced that, namely the “obedience ... of Jesus Christ” (Darby Translation). No one was able to fulfill the old standard of obedience, the law. But now they are able to fulfill the new standard by the new life they possess.

That new life is the Lord Jesus. In that way they are able to obey as the Lord Jesus has done. After all you read about the obedience of Jesus Christ. It is not about obeying the law. To the believer the standard of obedience is not the law, but Christ. Look at Him, how He always obeyed His Father

in love and you will surely learn to be obedient like that. That obedience goes much further than obeying the law.

As a final aspect – an aspect that, like obedience, is related to Jesus Christ – Peter points to the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”. Here you find the blood of Christ as the foundation to obey. The blood gives the perfect assurance that before God everything is well.

This aspect also forms a great contrast to what God has given to His people in the past. In the Old Testament indeed blood is mentioned as the basis for atonement, but that blood is related to animals. However, that blood cannot take away sins and cannot give anyone a perfect conscience before God. Only the blood of Christ can (Heb 10:4-14). The blood of Christ places you in perfect purity in the presence of God. Through the blood of Christ you have peace with God (Eph 2:13; Col 1:20; Rom 5:1). You may be sure of that position to be yours.

Next to that Peter adds a wish. He wishes that “grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure” or that “grace and peace may be multiplied” to the believers. By that he means that you will expect more and more from God’s grace and you will trust less and less in your own power. God’s grace will always be there to help you to do anything you have to do. If that awareness is present and also increases, you will surely experience the peace that Peter then wishes the believers.

God wants you to grow, that today you rejoice more in Him than yesterday, in spite of or maybe owing to the hardships that you experience. When your faith is put to the test you get the chance to multiply in knowing the grace that God gives to you and in the peace that God Himself has. Now read 1 Peter 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: In what blessings, according to these verses, may you rejoice?

## 1Pet 1:3-5 | A Living Hope

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to [obtain] an inheritance [which is] imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

V3. After his introductory words wherein he highlighted the greatness and the work of the triune God, Peter speaks out a praise. He is full of what the God and Father of the Lord Jesus has done. He cannot do anything else but worship Him. That is what always happens when you come under the impression of Who God is.

Because he is full of God he sees more of God, of Who He is and what He has done. He speaks in full admiration about God's "great mercy" through which He did great things which can only amaze us. 'Mercy' is compassion for people whose need is so great that they are in danger of ruin, while they themselves have no possibility at all to come out of that need. It is about totally helpless people who in no way could become partakers of the blessing of God. That is the opportunity for God to show His 'great mercy'.

Peter speaks about *great* mercy in relation to the being born again of a sinner and the blessings attached to it. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "has caused us to be born again". That is truly great mercy! You have felt your misery and despondency and also your total incapacity to change anything about it. You were standing totally outside of God's blessings. But God was very compassionate about you and He gave you new life.

The fact that you are born again implies that the origin of your new life is 'from above' (Jn 3:3, footnote). You have been begotten of God. You yourself could do nothing about that, just as you couldn't do anything about your natural birth.

You indeed received life through your natural birth, but no hope at all for a happy future. On the contrary, you were brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5). The results have also become visible in your life. Death and hell were therefore your final destination. Because God has

worked in you new life according to “His great mercy”, a radical change has happened in that final destination. You now have been born again “to a living hope”.

The hope that Peter presents here is totally different than the view to death and hell. This hope also goes much further than the prospect of a kingdom on earth under the government of the Messiah to which God’s earthly people always had looked forward to and is still looking forward to. The living hope is in fact related to a Jesus Christ Who is risen from the dead. The living hope that Peter presents here is not an earthly but a heavenly hope and therefore doesn’t look forward to the inheritance of the land of Canaan. “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” the eye is focused on a portion in another world.

Christ not only has given His blood and died, but He is also risen. You see a living Lord. Thereby you have a living hope, and beyond death you see everything there that is related to Him. Without His resurrection there would be no hope (1Cor 15:19-20). A living hope is a hope that is vividly before your eyes. It is not about something insecure, but contrarily this hope is an absolute assurance. Through the new life you are sure about that hope.

You can consider this hope both objectively and subjectively. By that I mean that you can see that hope as something that is *before* you, something you look forward to. That is the inheritance that is presented in the next verses. You can see that hope also as something that is *in* you, something you feel and experience. That is the hope for that inheritance, the desire for it that makes you to be motivated to joyfully move on through life as a pilgrim.

V4. Through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the hope for the inheritance has become your part. It is an inheritance that with perfect assurance will be your possession. It is reserved for you and it cannot be defiled by anything or robbed by anyone. The inheritance is fixed in heaven and is preserved there for you in Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Man.

Nothing has the power to diminish the value of that inheritance:

1. It is “imperishable”, therefore not to be harmed by death, through which it would ultimately be destroyed.

2. It is also “undefiled”, therefore free from every spot and also not to be damaged by anything attached to sin.

3. It also “will not fade away” and is therefore without any flaw or even a little reduction of its beauty and is not to be damaged by any test of time.

This inheritance is attached to ‘the heir of all things’ (Heb 1:2). Therefore it is untouchable for death, filthiness and decay.

The inheritance is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus that these Israelites, whom Peter is addressing, will once enter, as will you and me. However, it does not concern the kingdom on earth or the earthly part of the kingdom, which certainly will also be there, but the heavenly part of the kingdom. When the Lord Jesus will openly reign over heaven and earth, all believers who have died or have been taken up before the millennial kingdom comes, will be allowed to reign together with Him from heaven over all who are in heaven (angels, 1Cor 6:3) and who are on earth and over all things that are on earth (1Cor 6:2). It is the best part that you can ever imagine in the kingdom.

V5. The inheritance is therefore reserved for you by God in a place where no thief and moth and rust can take it away or tarnish it. But what about the heirs? Surely these are weak and powerless to preserve themselves. Therefore Peter also has an encouraging word for the heirs. They are protected by the power of God for the inheritance. Therefore you can be sure that the inheritance is reserved for you and that you are preserved for the inheritance.

And how does that happen? By nothing less than the “power of God”. As weak as you are, as strong is God. You are protected by a guard that is continuously there and which cannot be misguided or overpowered. That is quite an assurance for you as an heir that you will possess the inheritance!

The mention of ‘protected’ indicates that there is danger. That is something you should be aware of. The guard is not supposed to make you careless. You may know – and that is supposed to give you rest – that you are kept by the faithfulness and power of God. At the same time there is also something you should do. To experience God’s protecting power “faith” is needed from your side. Faith ascribes to God the place He is worthy of and it keeps you in the place of trust in Him. Thereby you hold

on to the statements of His Word. Faith is essential until the inheritance will be obtained.

The fact that His protection happens by the means of faith, means that it is only applied to believers. It also means that believers have the responsibility to entrust themselves to Him for that protection. After all, faith means to have confidence. He doesn't take His own by the hand to drag them along and in this way bring them to the final goal. He works by faith, whereby He also makes sure that your faith does not fail. Peter experienced that protection. After he denied the Lord he got restored because the Lord had prayed for him that his faith would not fail (Lk 22:32).

As it is said, faith is needed as long as we are on the way to the final goal. Peter calls that final goal "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time". Therefore the salvation here is still to come. The salvation is what will be our ultimate part when we are with the Lord and then come to earth together with Him.

That the salvation is *ready*, implies that everything that is necessary for it has been done already. That the salvation has not come yet has got to do with the longsuffering of God, Who is not wishing for any to perish (2Pet 3:9).

With "the last time" Peter means that when the salvation indeed comes, the fullness of the times has come. It is the millennial kingdom of peace in which all times will find their fulfillment (Eph 1:10). Then the salvation will be revealed, it will become visible. After the millennial kingdom there will be no period of time anymore, but eternity will start.

Now read 1 Peter 1:3-5 again.

Reflection: To what degree is 'the living hope' that you have received, alive?

## 1Pet 1:6-12 | The Proof of Faith

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, [being] more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that [would come] to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.*

V6. The time of blessing and rest that will come with the coming of the millennial kingdom rejoices the heart of the pilgrim and encourages him to move on in faith. It will not last much longer, it will take only “a little while” before you reach the goal. It is a short time in comparison to eternity and also in comparison to the time of the kingdom of peace that will last a thousand years (cf. 2Cor 4:17).

In that short time you will be distressed by “various trials”. Peter says additionally “if necessary”. When you in your life of faith are distressed by trials, it is because God thinks it to be necessary, in order to test your faith. Only when we face difficulties, it will appear what faith means to us, whether we really trust in God. When everything is going smoothly it is not difficult to have faith.

Trials or tests do not make things pleasant, they are no source of joy, but of sorrow. Nevertheless, there can be joy when you are tempted. After all, it can be a cause of joy when you consider that the trial or temptation is a proof that God is engaged with you. A trial that you have to face shows that He has an interest in you. This is how James is presenting it (Jam 1:3). So on the one hand there is sorrow, on the other hand there is joy (cf. 2Cor 6:10).



V7. There are “various” or different kinds of trials that God sends or allows to happen in the life of the believer to test his faith. As it is said, He does that only when He thinks it to be necessary. For the important thing that He has in mind is that the faith will be expressed. Trials are therefore tests, for the goal of the test is not only to make the faith express itself, but also to make it more pure. To God the faith of His own is “more precious than gold”. Gold is the most precious metal in creation, but it is perishable. Faith on the contrary is not perishable.

To make gold as pure as possible it is freed from everything that diminishes its value. To achieve that, a process is needed whereby it is kept in the fire and is smelted. In that way everything that is not gold will float to the surface and will be removed. It is the same with faith that is purified from all unnatural elements (Psa 66:10; Pro 17:3) in the fiery trial (1Pet 4:12). Tests make faith more and more pure (Job 23:10). Also the prophet Malachi speaks about the purifying process that the believers from Israel will have to endure in the great tribulation, which is with a view to the coming of the Messiah (Mal 3:1-3).

The purification process is done by the Divine Smelter. He determines the level of the temperature of the test with a view to the trueness of the faith. Thereby He will not surpass what faith can bear (1Cor 10:13).

The result of His perfect wisdom will become completely visible at the revelation of Jesus Christ, Who will then be glorified in His saints and be marveled at among all who have believed (2Thes 1:10). Then it will become visible before all eyes how precious that faith is, that enabled these believers on earth to endure everything. The invisible Christ Who was rejected by the world, but Who meant everything to those believers, will become visible as the true motive of their life. He will be given all praise and honor and glory for His love and grace that surpass everything. This love and grace have given strength to His own to keep trusting in Him in the most difficult circumstances.

V8. Still Peter has not finished yet with presenting the glories that are related to the Lord Jesus and the faith in Him. Your life in faith does not only consist of expecting and looking forward to, but also of something that you now already possess and that is He Himself. You do not see Him, you even

have not ever seen Him, but you still love Him. That is because of your new nature that loves the Beloved. By this you have eyes of the heart and see in faith (Eph 1:18; Heb 11:10,27; Jn 8:56).

To love Him and to rejoice in Him have a decisive and educational influence on your heart. It makes the heart firm and fills it with joy, whatever the circumstances. You have never ever seen the Lord Jesus, nor have you seen His blood, neither His work on the cross. But you surely know that it is all true. You believe that. It gives you a joy that you cannot possibly put into words. Your whole heart and life are full of it. It is a joy that is “full of glory”, which means that this joy is not from the earth and also doesn’t fit here, but it comes from heaven. ‘Full of glory’ means full of praise. It is a joy that is full of the praise due to the Lord Jesus.

V9. The pleasure of that joy also gives the consciousness of the “salvation of your soul”. The salvation of the soul is “the outcome of your faith”, meaning the goal of faith, that what is established by faith. You have accepted the Lord Jesus as the One Who was willing to die for your sins on the cross. That immediately gave you the salvation of your soul. That your soul has been saved implies that you inwardly have been perfectly delivered from the consequences of sin and that you are also free from the fruits of the misery of sin.

Your body, however, has not been saved yet (Rom 8:23). You still can get sick for instance. Also creation has not been saved yet, but still groans under the consequences of sin (Rom 8:22). The full salvation is still to come, that is what you are hoping for and that is where you with perseverance are looking forward to (Rom 8:24-25).

V10. The prophets of the Old Testament have prophesied about this salvation. They spoke of a time of peace and righteousness on earth under the blessed reign of the Lord Jesus. They understood that they were talking about things that they themselves did not possess, but that it means “grace” to those who were going to partake of that. That grace was possessed by the readers of this letter. Isn’t it a great grace to be able to believe in Him through Whom the salvation has been fully realized in your soul and through Whom the salvation will be fully realized in creation?

V11. The prophets have shown the greatest interest in the things about which the “Spirit of Christ” inspired them to write. They made efforts to understand the things they wrote about. That a glorious time was going to come with the revelation of the Messiah was not a mystery to them. But what they could not understand, is that the Messiah first had to suffer and only thereafter the time of all kind of glories will come. Isn’t it indeed a great grace for you to know that the Messiah Jesus Who had suffered on earth, has now already been crowned in heaven with honor and glory (Heb 2:9) and that He will soon fill the world with His glory?

V12. God’s Spirit revealed to the prophets that the things they were reporting were not for themselves, but for the Jewish readers of this letter and also for us. Your eyes have been opened by those who have preached the gospel to you. They are the New Testament evangelists, for, according to Peter, they had spoken “by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven”. After all, the Holy Spirit could only come after the Lord Jesus was glorified by God in heaven (Jn 7:39; Acts 2:33). What the Holy Spirit has revealed now in the gospel, relates to a glorified Christ and the relation of the believers with Him.

Then you read about a second group of those who are interested: the angels. So there are two groups of interested in these things: the prophets and the angels. But the angels themselves do not partake of the things in which they are interested. The angels long to gain insight in the mystery of how God turned murderers of His Son into worshipers of His Son. They remember the rebellion among the angels, when Satan and his followers rebelled against God. They know how these apostate angels have caused that also man became rebellious against God. And now God grants salvation to fallen, rebellious people. That’s what extremely amazes the angels and that is something of which they would love to understand more.

In that view angels are an example to many Christians who, while they indeed partake of these things don’t show any interest in them at all. I assume that this does not apply to you, for then you would not read this explanation.

Now read 1 Peter 1:6-12 again.

Reflection: How can you purify your faith and how do you experience your joy in the Lord?

## 1Pet 1:13-16 | Be Sober and Holy

*13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit], fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts [which were yours] in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*

V13. After the explanation about what has to do with Christ and His suffering and His glory, Peter speaks about the practical consequences that go together with these facts. You may know what your blessings are, but according to God's thoughts you only have a right understanding of them if they also have an effect in your life. To work that out, Peter exhorts to take certain actions. He does so in forceful, imperative language.

First he says that you must "prepare your minds for actions" or "having girded up the loins of your mind" (Darby Translation). To 'gird up' has to do with making yourself ready to set out, prepare yourself to leave. You see that when the people of Israel had to make themselves ready to leave Egypt (Exo 12:11). This is how you should be ready for the call of the Lord to leave the world and enter into the kingdom. This is the proper attitude of the pilgrim and that prevents you from settling yourself here on earth as if your future is here below. Other aspects that are related to girding up, are service and struggle (Lk 12:35,37; Jn 13:4-5; Eph 6:14).

What we must gird up, is 'the loins'. The loins indicate the strength to walk (Deu 33:11; Job 40:16; Pro 31:17). If you have an ailment in your loins you can forget about a brisk walk. Here the loins are connected to your mind. The exhortation to gird up the loins of your mind means that you are exhorted to let yourself to be guided in your thinking by Christ from Whom you have received your mind, to be strengthened with power and spiritually be enlightened (1Jn 5:20). You have a mind, which means insight by God's Spirit and God's Word, of the things that will happen. Remain focused on those things and don't let yourself be distracted by all kinds of matters that may seem interesting, but which are only ideas of people.

To that the next exhortation, “keep sober”, is connected. You are sober if you see reality as it really is. That reality is the coming revelation of Jesus Christ Who will come to judge the world and to establish His kingdom.

Your soberness will disappear if you do not focus your mind on the future, but on the here and now. I have heard about a quite serious story that illustrates this biblical soberness well. It is about the proclamation of the gospel to cannibals. Some evangelists went to cannibals to preach the gospel to them. Two of them were killed and eaten by them. Another one had the chance to escape. Still, a certain John persisted to go there to bring the gospel to those people. When he talked about this with an old theologian, the latter tried to persuade him with apparently sober argument to stop him from going.

The answer of John was: ‘You will soon be buried and be eaten by worms. It is not a big difference whether I will be buried here and be eaten by worms or go there and be eaten by cannibals.’ That is ‘soberly thinking’ in the biblical sense of the word. The result is that the gospel reached that place and people came to faith there.

This soberness focuses the thoughts on the future that is totally controlled by the Lord Jesus. If you belong to Him, you will also share in His future, in His revelation or appearance. Then, after the exhortations to gird up your mind, you are exhorted to fully hope “on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”. You must “fully” hope on that. Therefore you should not allow anything to diminish that hope. No worry or illness should cause you hope less on that grace.

It goes without saying that you are not to allow a certain sin to be the cause of that. When there is sin in your life you will not even hope on that grace. Then you will keep the thought of the revelation of the Lord Jesus at a distance. To look forward again to His coming with desire it is necessary for you to confess your sin. If there is sin in your life, you must make haste to remove that hindrance.

V14. Maybe there is no concrete sin in your life, but there is the inclination to give in to sin. You feel that you are drawn to commit a certain sin. That may be caused by your desires of the past. Considering that, the next exhortation comes to you: ‘Be as a child of obedience not conformed to the

former lusts.’ Do you remember what verse 2 says? You have been called to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Literally it is not ‘obedient children’, but “children of obedience”, children who live according to the principle of obedience. That you are able to live as a child of obedience is the result of the fact that you are a child of God. You are born of God and due to that you have received God’s nature (2Pet 1:4).

It seems strange that Peter speaks to them about “former ... in your ignorance”, while in their past they were so familiar with God. The Jews were treating the ignorant Gentiles with contempt and thought that only they had the knowledge regarding the true God (Rom 2:17-20). It is true that God revealed Himself to them in a special way. However, that’s what made them arrogant. Their whole history has shown that they only boasted in their outward position and at the same time they were following their fleshly lusts.

Before the time that the Jews, to whom this letter is addressed, had come to faith in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, they were also living like that. They abandoned that when they converted, but the danger to fall back is always there. For that reason they need to be warned not to live like that again.

V15. After this warning not to do something an exhortation follows to do something. The Scripture is always balanced. Scripture speaks about putting aside something and putting on something (Col 3:8,12). The point here is about not being conformed to something of the past and instead becoming holy in all your behavior. In this respect, you can compare your life to a garden. A garden is more than the absence of weed. It is necessary to weed, but it is not an occupation in itself. The important thing is that the garden exposes a sea of flowers or that it bears fruits.

This is how your life as a Christian is like. That life is not characterized by things that are not there, but by things that are there or things that are still to come. Here the point is that everything in your life, “all [your] walk”, thus your whole appearance, is holy, meaning completely consecrated to God. The essential thing is that Christ, the Man Who is completely consecrated to God, becomes visible in your life.

To be holy seems negative. That is true if you only see it as being set apart from the wrong. But to be holy is positive. The main idea is in fact: to be set apart for (something). You derive that from the first time the word 'sanctify' in the Bible is used. That is at the creation when God sanctifies the seventh day (Gen 2:3). At that time there was nothing wrong yet in the creation. Everything that God had made was very good. Still God sanctified the seventh day. He set that day apart from all the other days as a day for Himself.

V16. To underline the importance of holiness Peter quotes a verse from the Old Testament. There God appeals to His people to be holy, because He is holy (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26-27). But would His holiness only apply to the Old Testament and not to the New Testament? If you give this some thought, it will be clear to you that the holy God of the Old Testament is the same holy God of the New Testament. Nowhere has that become more evident than when He did not spare His own Son on the cross.

In the Old Testament He could not have anything to do with sin and in the New Testament He cannot either. The appeal to be holy is obvious because God is holy. He can apply no lower standard than Himself to a people associated with Him, regardless of whether they are an Old Testament or a New Testament people. The message concerning God's holiness that resounds in the Old Testament resonates just as clearly here through Peter here in the New Testament. That call should lead you to consecrate yourself completely to Him.

Now read 1 Peter 1:13-16 again.

Reflection: Why is it important to be 'sober' and 'holy'?

## **1Pet 1:17-21 | Redeemed With Precious Blood**

*17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay [on earth]; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, [the blood] of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

V17. Peter adds another argument to the appeal to be holy. That argument comes from the great privilege that you now have, that you may call God your Father. That privilege is indeed great. By the Spirit Who dwells in you, you cry out “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). You may call on Him, honor Him, glorify and worship Him.

However, to that privilege is also attached a responsibility. God is a Father Who loves you and Who, because of His love for you, also disciplines you if He sees that you are in danger to drift away. God is not an earthly father, who often does not discipline or sometimes even practices discipline out of a wrong motive (Heb 12:9-10a). He is a Father Who only disciplines when it is necessary.

He perfectly judges each one's work without giving preference to or being detrimental to anyone. He doesn't only discipline to test your faith, but He also disciplines when your holiness is in lack of something (see Heb 12:10b).

The judgment of the Father that Peter talks about here, does not refer to the judgment after this earthly life. That judgment has been given to the Lord Jesus by Him (Jn 5:27). The judgment of the Father relates to your life as a pilgrim. If your life honors Him, it has His approval. If your life dishonors Him He will come your way to clarify to you that something has to be changed.

Therefore, you must go your way on earth “in fear”. Fear does not imply to be afraid of God or of still going to perish. Fear here means to fear for yourself because you know what is still within yourself that may cause



you to do something that will grieve God your Father. Consider that you are His child and that you have become that by the redemption that the Lord Jesus has accomplished for you. What a huge price did He pay for that! How could you still walk in the desires of the past, while you have been redeemed in such a way?

The fear to do something that is not to the honor of God ought to characterize you “during the time of your stay [on earth]”. The expression ‘stay’ or ‘sojourning’ indicates that you have no permanent residence on earth. As you have seen earlier you are addressed in this letter as a pilgrim. You are a stranger on earth, on the way to your inheritance. That is something you should continually be aware of, for otherwise you will be distracted from the goal by various attractive things around you.

The path of a sojourner is the path of the Lord Jesus. He has been the true Stranger and Sojourner on earth. He had no home, even no place where He could lay His head (Mt 8:20). If you stay focused on Him you will walk throughout the time of your stay here in a way that is pleasing to God.

V18. From this verse can be derived that it is not about a fear to still be able to perish or a fear because of the uncertainty whether you are or are not a child of God. Peter says clearly “knowing”. That rules out every possible doubt. And what do they know precisely? That they have been redeemed. They know what had certainly not and what certainly had redeemed them. They also know what they have been redeemed from: from all their rituals and traditions, from the walk of their ancestors.

By doing whatever you did before, you could not be redeemed. A walk after tradition, after copied and transmitted rituals, doesn’t bring a man any closer to redemption. On the contrary. To one who in his heart rely on an outward walk, true redemption will disappear more and more out of sight. Such a person will get stuck more and more in outer appearances. Such a walk bears no fruit at all; it makes a person ‘unfruitful’ in the sense of meaningless.

To partake of the blessings of God, it is essential to get redeemed from such a walk. Such a walk is like a prison. Those to whom Peter is writing could not be redeemed from that prison by perishable things like silver and gold. They know about a redemption by silver and gold (Exo 30:12),

but that was an outward redemption and not deliverance from a system that kept them imprisoned. It is the same as the blood of bulls and goats that cannot take away sins (Heb 10:4).

V19. In contrast to that completely inadequate blood is the “precious blood ... of Christ”. That blood has certainly been sufficient to work the true and definite redemption. The blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of all your sins and for the redemption from all powers that were keeping you in bondage. It is the blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless.

The lamb was the basis of the redemption of God’s earthly people from Egypt, whom by the blood were protected against the judgment of God (Exo 12:1-13). The Lamb, Christ, is the basis of Christendom. Through the surrender of Christ in death and the shedding of His blood God’s judgment passes over each one who hides behind it. This applies to all who believe that Christ also shed His blood for their sins. Everyone who believes that partakes of the eternal redemption (Heb 9:12).

V20. God had the Lamb in mind already “before the foundation of the world”. Our redemption did not arise in God when He saw that sin entered the world and how miserable our condition was. God was not surprised by the fall of man. He knew what man would do. Before man had sinned, indeed before the world was created, His mind was already focused on His Son, of Whom He knew that He was going to be the Lamb.

This is what makes our position as Christians much more wonderful than that of Israel. Israel is a people that is chosen by God *from* the foundation of the world and that is destined for *the earth* (Mt 25:34; Rev 13:8). The New Testament believers are chosen *before* the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) and are destined for *heaven*.

What God already knew before the foundation of the world He did not keep to Himself alone. Christ has been revealed as the Lamb. He revealed Himself to His people and to the world. That’s why John could point to Him and say: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). The last times began when the Lord Jesus came into the world as the Lamb. In all previous times God tried to move the most privileged people on earth, His people, to obedience to Him. Again and again man made clear that he was not willing to.

Then, as the final test, His Son came on earth. But instead of listening to Him the sin of man is exposed in the most horrible way. Men rejected and murdered the Son. In this way the obduracy of man was definitely determined. In a striking way this is all illustrated in the parable of the wicked vine-growers that is told by the Lord Jesus (Mt 21:33-46).

What means man ends, has given God the opportunity to make a new beginning. On the one hand the Lord Jesus has been revealed as the Lamb to determine the sin of man in the most obvious way. When man rejects God, Who has revealed Himself in goodness, his condition is hopeless. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus has revealed Himself as the Lamb for the sake of each who believes, thus also for your sake. Through Him you believe in God. In Him you see that God is not an angry and vindictive God. On the basis of what the Lord Jesus has done for you, you know that God is not against you anymore, but He is for you (Rom 8:31-32). After all He gave His Son as the Lamb.

V21. Therefore you not only believe in the Lord Jesus as the One Who protects you against the wrath of God, but you also believe in God as the One Who made everything well. By raising Christ from the dead God has given the convincing evidence that He has considered and accepted the work of His Son as perfect. God gave Him the glory due to Him.

Your faith and hope are focused on *God*. All originated in Him. By the faith in what God has done with His Christ He will lead you to the goal. With this is connected the hope that the same Lord Who is with God now will one day return to reign and you will be with Him then.

Now read 1 Peter 1:17-21 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in this section about the work of God, about the work of Christ and about yourself?

## 1Pet 1:22-25 | Brotherly Love and Born Again

*22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, [that is], through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, 25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.*

V22. After the impressive words in the previous verses about the work of Christ and the wonderful results it has for those who partake of it, it is not a surprise that an appeal follows for "a sincere love of the brethren". You have not reached your destination yet, you are still on the way to the inheritance. In the world you are a pilgrim, but you have a company in the world where you are at home. On the way to the goal you see brothers and sisters around you, people who have the same goal in mind. They are the objects of the same love of God and redeemed by the same Lamb. In their company you feel the warmth of brotherly love. Your presence contributes to the temperature of the brotherly love, for brotherly love is mutual. It receives and radiates warmth.

The call comes to you as a person whose soul has been purified "in obedience to the truth". You have recognized yourself as a sinner in the light of God's truth and in obedience you have confessed your sins to God and have been converted. That has done a purifying work on you (Jn 15:3). You have become pure, you have received a pure heart. In practice it becomes visible in sincerely loving your brother and sister. The brotherly love is a proof of the new nature. You love your brothers because they are born of God (1Jn 5:1).

The fact that Peter speaks about 'sincere' love of the brethren, makes clear that it is a true love, love without hypocrisy and without pretense. Hypocrisy, pretending to be someone you're not, belongs to your former life. Therefore, in the company of brothers and sisters it is not about a little, dull love, but about 'fervent love' to one another. It is a command to love one another intensely. That excludes that we love each other dutifully.

Neither should insincere motives or impure intentions play a role in this regard. It should be love that comes from a pure heart.

V23. In a pure heart there is no room for sin; it is a heart that lives in fellowship with God. That fellowship started with having been born again. This new birth is a birth that has been worked by God's Word and God's Spirit (Jn 3:5). The Word is the seed that was sown in your heart and out of which the new life has been developed. The Word of God has life in itself. That life is not "perishable", transient, but "imperishable", everlasting, as God Himself is the imperishable, everlasting God (Rom 1:23; 1Tim 1:17). When He gives life, it is the life from Himself that of course also has His features.

V24. That life is in huge contrast to the life of the man who is not born of God. This contrast you also see in the quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 40:6-8). From the quotation it becomes clear what natural man is like as originated from perishable seed. The life of a natural man is like grass and like the flower of grass. It is a metaphorical illustration of a life in which everything looks prosperous and wonderful, but if you look at it closely it is momentary and its loveliness quickly fades away.

V25. In contrast to that life Isaiah does not present the life from God, but the Word of God. The life from God is inseparably related to the Word of God. We have received the new life of the new birth only because God has revealed His Word to us by preaching. That Word has worked the new life in us and therefore that life endures forever. It cannot perish, just as nothing of God's words can perish. The new nature endures forever, for that is as imperishable as the Word of God.

Now read 1 Peter 1:22-25 again.

Reflection: How do you express your love to your brothers and sisters?

## 1 Peter 2

### **1Pet 2:1-2 | Spiritual Growth**

*1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,*

V1. This verse connects to the previous section. This is evident from the opening words “therefore, putting aside”. Those words sound like a logical result of what is said earlier. What has to be put aside is all displays of the flesh, the ego, bringing down others in favor of yourself. ‘To put aside’ means to radically and immediately break with these things and in no way allow them to control you again. When Peter appeals to put these things aside it implies that they occur among the readers of his letter and that they can also occur among us. Or don’t you recognize that you can also behave like that at times?

It is also not about a display at times on a certain occasion, but it is about “all malice and “all deceit” and “all slander”.

1. How easy do we feel “malice” arise from ourselves for various reasons,
2. how easy do we make use of “deceit”,
3. do we deceive others in various situations and do we pretend ourselves to be better (“hypocrisy”) or
4. do we begrudge others all kinds of things they possess (“envy”).
5. And let us not forget the “slander”. How easy we make ourselves guilty of that in all kinds of conversations.

Inwardly distance yourself from it, do not be tempted by it, and condemn it immediately if you feel any of the things Peter mentions arise in you.

V2. Besides these things seriously damage the relations among believers, they are also great hindrances for the spiritual growth. Peter speaks next about this. If you are born again you have new life. That life longs for food, just like a newborn baby longs for it. You do not have to encourage a baby

to drink. He naturally gives a sign for that. The food of a believer is the “pure milk” of the Word of God.

A healthy spiritual growth is extraordinarily important. Even like in natural life, health in spiritual life also depends on the kind of food you consume. Therefore you should put aside everything that sabotages the brotherly love, which hinders the growth. That is verse 1. Instead, you must drink in the good Word, as a baby at the mother’s breast does because he senses that there is the life that is needed to grow. That is verse 2.

The point here is not the first stage of the spiritual growth, about a person who is newly converted. It is not about a phase in the spiritual growth (like in Heb 5:12), but it is about a feature that applies to both babies in faith and spiritually matured believers. It goes for each believer that spiritual undernourishment arises when there is no hunger for it and no consumption. If a believer does not hunger for the Word there is definitely something wrong. A spiritually healthy Christian continually hungers for the milk of God’s Word. By nourishing yourself with God’s Word you grow to salvation, that is to the full salvation.

God’s Word has saving power, not only for the future, but also for the path that brings you there. There are three aspects attached to salvation. The first is that you are saved for eternity. The second is that you are kept safe in all kinds of dangerous situations you encounter on your path of faith by obeying the Word. The third is that you are saved when you are with the Lord.

If you stuff yourself with light or even foolish reading material you will not grow spiritually and you will grow crooked. Easily readable, cheap novels with a little bit of the gospel do not protect you against the attacks of satan who is seeking to make you sin. If you read such reading material as a kind of spiritual candy, you will spiritually get sick. It is even more damaging if you consume reading material that contain poison, for then the end is death. Then nothing will be left of your testimony as a Christian than a corpse.

Recently I read a report on Habakkuk, a digital daily magazine, on the internet, that I would like to pass on to you at the end of this section. It has

got everything to do with integrating God's Word within yourself. The report reads as follows:

'How do you properly transfer knowledge? ... the French writer and a former teacher Daniel Pennac ... argues: Education needs slowness and a revaluation of work as an activity of the spirit for the long duration. Only by slowness you can integrate something within yourself ....(Trouw, Dutch daily newspaper 15-12-2008)

According to Pennac you do a great favor to your pupils if you help them to develop a 'mental library'. Pennac managed to make his own students fanatically learn phrases by heart. 'A mental library', isn't that an awesome possession! It's like always having a piece of Kafka or Marquez at hand. It's not about learning something by heart which you later forget. No, it is about penetrating in the phrases step by step. And as soon as you have understood the phrase, it is a question of repeating and repeating, like someone who really knows what he's talking about. Then you should practice of course and remain repeating, but you will not manage without understanding it.'

Without being conscious of that Pennac proposes a great challenge to Christians ... We have the Bible often in snippets in our head ... Wouldn't that be an enormous treasure if you would have complete chapters or even complete books from the Bible in your mental library? That you penetrate through the texts, step by step. And as soon as you have the understanding of a phrase, you repeat and repeat again ...' [End of report].

Now read 1 Peter 2:1-2 again.

Reflection: What are you doing, in order to grow spiritually?



## 1Pet 2:3-8 | A Holy Priesthood

*3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. 4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For [this] is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER [stone], AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER [stone]," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this [doom] they were also appointed.*

V3. So it is important that you spiritually grow. To do that properly you should not depend on a good intellect, but on your spiritual taste. The things Peter is speaking about do not address the intellect, but the heart that has "tasted the kindness of the Lord". It is about the word of the Beloved, and love is in the first place related to the heart, with the feelings that are in there for the Beloved. If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord you cannot help but long to know Him better. And how do you manage to know Him better? Through His Word. The more you read in His Word the more you will grow in your knowledge of Him.

Once you have tasted the Word and you have acquired the taste for it, your hunger for more will increase more and more. You may have heard the remark that he or she has 'a good taste', by which people refer to the clothes a person wears or the way a person has decorated his house. Someone's taste appears in that way. Your taste for God's Word becomes apparent from the value that God's Word has for you. Do you read it and do you live up to it? Then you will certainly grow.

V4. The growth also has a purpose. It is God's purpose that you behave as a priest, that you serve Him as a priest in His house. That is what the following verses are dealing with. Considering the priest service, it is of importance that you do not grow improperly. In the book of Leviticus, the book that is especially about the priest service, there is mention of

members of the priestly family that are not allowed to exercise that service because of a defect of the body (Lev 21:16-23).

If we apply that spiritually, it means that a person cannot exercise priestly service if he hasn't got a good view on his position as a believer, due to wrong teachings. You may think of a person who has always heard that it is not possible for you to know for sure whether you are saved, or that a believer who surely knows he is saved, thinks that he still can perish.

The priesthood of the believer is directly connected to the growth of the believer. These two aspects are connected to one another through the Lord Jesus as "a living stone". You came to Him when you converted and He accepted you. Coming to Him is however not an action that you do only once, after which you can continue to go your own way again. Now you have become a child of God, it is important that you continue to go to Him. He is the living stone. He has risen from the dead. Remember that for you there is life in Him alone. Therefore you are to be and remain connected to Him.

To grow and to be edified you are dependent on Him. You see that Peter changes metaphors. First he speaks about growth and now he speaks about a stone and later about a house. He uses all these metaphors to make clear how your relationship to Christ has become.

You come to Him Who "has been rejected by men". You clearly see that in the four Gospels. You read there how His people and the Gentiles have crucified Him and chose Barabbas instead of Him. Once you also rejected Him, but now you have come to Him and you continually come to Him. In Him you have discovered the most precious, which He always has been for God. You read here that He "is choice and precious in the sight of God". That is much more than what He means to you, but at the same time it is something that you fully agree with. He is chosen by and precious to God and also to you.

V5. Because He is the living stone and you have come to Him, you now also have become a living stone. That implies that you have His nature. And there is still more. You are not the only one who became a living stone. To build a house you need many stones. That is how Peter also pres-

ents it. Together with all other living stones, which means together with each believer, you are built up “as a spiritual house”.

The purpose of this house is clear. It is a house in which God dwells and in which the believers also may dwell (Eph 2:19-22). This house is built on the Lord Jesus as the Son of the living God (Mt 16:16-18). He is the living stone, the rock (*petra* in Greek), and you and all believers are ‘Peter’ (that means: stone, a piece of the rock). You see here a beautiful play of words.

Peter, however, doesn’t see the believers as God’s household , but as priests. Therefore the house here is a dwelling place of priests and their task is to offer up spiritual sacrifices. You are a priest and together with others you form “a holy priesthood”, a generation of priests. As a living stone together with other living stones form a spiritual house, you form as a priest together with others priest a priesthood.

The task of a priest in the Old Testament is to offer sacrifices. The task of a priest in the New Testament is not different. What is indeed different is the offering service. That does not consist of literal sacrifices, but of spiritual sacrifices (Heb 13:15). To God only the sacrifices that refer to His Son and the work He has accomplished, are pleasing. You come to offer up these sacrifices if you see how precious the Lord Jesus is to God.

The priesthood is a ‘holy’ priesthood. It is a priesthood that is totally for God, but it is also set apart by Him. Human efforts are excluded. It is one of the many and major deceptions of roman-catholicism to let literal priests, on the ground of a human training, function as a separate group between church people and God. This mediation is a denial of the general priesthood that God has established for all believers.

You are a priest and each true child of God is a priest. Any appointment, consecration or blessing ceremony by men is against what God has established on the ground of the work of His Son. If that’s the way God has established it, then make use of that. Offer up those sacrifices. How do you do that? By telling God Who the Lord Jesus is for you, what He has done for you. Just simply tell God what you have read in His Word about His Son. That is what He loves to hear and He will show you more and more of His Son as a response to that.

V6. Scripture testifies on each page of the joy that God finds in the Lord Jesus. Peter quotes from it to confirm what he has just said. With the word “behold” he appeals to look at it carefully and to make yourself aware that the initiative was taken by God. He laid “a choice stone, a precious corner [stone]” in Zion (Isa 28:16). The purpose of the use of the quotation is to make clear to you that God Himself has laid this stone.

In the quotation it is about Zion or Jerusalem, but it also applies to us. It applies to both the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem that only what is built on Christ, will remain. Because you have put your trust in Him you “will not be disappointed”. That applies to everyone who does that, whatever the circumstances are in which he or she may be.

V7. This precious value is only for those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the Chosen One of God. Peter presents this precious value to the remnant of the Jews whom he addresses. And he not only addresses them. It is also true for all who believe.

There are two possible ways how people respond if Christ is presented as this precious value. The one response is that it makes a person entrust himself to Him in the awareness of Who He is to God. The other response is that one rejects Him in unbelief.

V8. Christ is the touchstone for each person. It is either accepting or falling. What is most precious to the believer is the most odious to the unbeliever. For those who do not believe, Christ is the stone over which they stumble. Again Peter quotes a verse of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 8:14). God’s Word has prophesied that the unbelieving Jews will fall by stumbling over Him and they indeed fell when they stumbled over Him.

The fact that they were appointed to stumble over Him, does not mean that God has appointed them to reject the Lord Jesus. God does not appoint anyone to reject His Son. What he indeed appoints, is that he who disobeys Him, will stumble over the word that He has spoken over His Son. The inevitable consequence of disobedience is the rejection of the Word.

You can compare it to a fine that someone receives, for example, for parking incorrectly. He is not appointed to parking his car incorrectly, but if he does, he is appointed to receive a fine. This is how someone with a rejecting mind toward the Lord Jesus is appointed to stumble over the Word.

But that is not the case with those to whom Peter writes, neither with you. That will be explained in the next portion.

Now read 1 Peter 2:3-8 again.

Reflection: How does your priest service look like?

## 1Pet 2:9-12 | A Royal Priesthood

*9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR [God's] OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe [them], glorify God in the day of visitation.*

V9. You may know that you belong to a “chosen race”. That’s awesome of course! That race embraces all people that are born of God. In the Old Testament Israel was God’s chosen people (Deu 7:6; Isa 43:20). That embraced everyone who was born an Israelite. But the chosen race which you belong to, surpasses all boundaries and goes beyond every nationality. This race is not connected to earth, but to heaven and to Christ Who is there.

You may also know that you belong to “a royal priesthood” (cf. Exo 19:6). Earlier, in verse 5, you saw that you partake of a “holy priesthood”. The important aspect there is the approach to God as a priest in His house to have fellowship with Him about the Lord Jesus. The “royal priesthood” that you now have read about, presents another aspect of the priesthood, which is toward the world.

You can say that your service as a holy priest in the sanctuary is the source of your service as a royal priest in the world. In the sanctuary you see Christ and you are transformed into His image. The result will be that you proclaim the excellencies, i.e. the excellent features or attributes of God in the world. In other words, that you reveal His attributes. Also this priest service is for all believers.

So the royal priesthood is focused on the world. The important thing thereby is that you indeed radiate the dignity of a king, but still do not exercise the rights that a king has. A wonderful example we have in the Lord Jesus. He is a King when He stands before Pilate (Jn 18:33-37). That’s what He also radiates, but He doesn’t exercise that right at that moment. The exer-

cise of His kingship still has to come and therefore also the exercise of our kingship.

But to know Who the Lord Jesus is, the world doesn't need to wait for the time that He comes. We are here to represent Him. We are not kings yet in the sense of 'ruling kings', but we are indeed able to behave like kings. We do that by showing God's excellencies.

Before we take a look at the excellencies of God, you see that there are still two more descriptions mentioned, regarding the company you partake of. You belong to "a holy nation" (cf. Exo 19:6; Deu 7:6; Isa 62:12). The company you now belong to is completely separated from all nations of the world. As a member of His nation, God has set you apart from all nations on earth, so that you may be for Him alone. That is emphasized by the expression "a people for [God's] own possession" (Exo 19:6; Deu 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17). God has a people of His own, that is the people that He has chosen to be for Himself through the work of the Lord Jesus (Tit 2:14). Through this people He wants to show the world Who He is.

This people has the responsibility to proclaim His "excellencies". Proclaiming has not that much to do with 'speaking', but more with 'revealing', demonstrating by what you as a member of that people, are, what you do and what you say. It is about your whole life, in which God and the Lord Jesus can be seen. To make that possible He has called you out of the darkness of sin to be in His "marvelous light". That light is 'marvelous'. In that light you see Who He is. God took away everything that disturbed that and He also took you away from the realm of darkness. What a great God He is that He proceeded in this way, making no concession to even one of His holy demands.

V10. There has been a tremendous change in the relationship between God and what Peter can now call "the people of God". They to whom Peter writes this letter were in literal sense God's people indeed, but in spiritual sense they were "not a people". They lost the right to be God's people.

God metaphorically expressed that in the family situation of the prophet Hosea and in the names that Hosea had to give his children (Hos 1:6,9; 2:1,22). The unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife toward Hosea is a metaphor of the unfaithfulness of God's people toward Him. In the names that Hosea

had to give his children, God makes clear that He couldn't call His people His people anymore (Lo-Ammi, Hos 1:9) and that He could not allow them to partake of mercy anymore (Lo-Ruchama, Hos 1:6). What applies here to God's old people we can apply to each man.

By God's grace there will be a change in this broken relationship. Soon He will pick up the thread with His people and call them His people again and be merciful to them again. That is what Peter applies to those whom he is addressing and it is also applied to you. Through the work of Christ on the cross and faith in Him, they have become God's people and you too have become a member of that people. You can only praise Him for this great grace and mercy and show in your life that you honor Him for that.

V11. How this will take place, is discussed in the following verses. In the section of chapter 2:11-3:12 is told how you can be God's witness in the world. You get instructions there for a more detailed implementation of proclaiming God's excellencies. It is about your walk of life, in which there are several areas in which your life takes place. For instance, that you are subjected to the government in society. You are also dealing with your job or study and how you behave yourself therein. Also the way of life in the family and among relatives and your conduct among the believers are dealt with.

Peter presents these instructions as admonitions or exhortations. To create an entry for his admonitions, he addresses his readers as "beloved". In that way he surrounds his admonitions with the realm and warmth of brotherly love. He is absolutely aware of the fact that believers live in a hostile world which causes them to be exposed to suffering. In the world you are an 'alien' and a 'stranger'. As an alien you live among people who live in a place which is their home, while your home is somewhere else. They have various facilities, while you are not entitled to anything. As a stranger you are on strange ground and you speak another language, while you know that your own homeland is heaven.

By the way of life of the people around you and the environment you live in, you continually are under pressure to adapt yourself to their world of life. Therefore the reminder of the fact that you are an alien and a stranger, is not superfluous. There is still another danger that you may adapt to the



world and that has to do with your “fleshy lusts”. That doesn’t refer to what is *around you*, but it refers to what is *within yourself*.

The world you live in and the fleshy lusts within you, form a perfect match together. The fleshy lusts always seek to have control. Therefore Peter admonishes his readers to abstain from those lusts, meaning that they are to be ignored, for otherwise they will bring the soul into bondage again. You shouldn’t pay attention to them (Rom 13:14). The Holy Spirit, Who resists the lust of the flesh (Gal 5:17), is willing to give the strength for that. The fleshy lusts always fight against the soul that through conversion wants to nourish himself with Christ.

V12. Therefore you must also do something in reaction to that and that is to clearly say ‘no’ to the lusts of the flesh. Then you can concentrate yourself on a behavior that is “excellent”. This is also something the Holy Spirit is willing to help with (Gal 5:16). An excellent behavior “among the Gentiles”, that are the people of the world, underlines the confession that you make with your mouth.

Despite your excellent behavior the people of the world will slander you. It should not be the case that they have a reason to slander you because of your evil behavior. But even if you do good, the world will slander you. That is what they also did of the Lord Jesus, Who did only good.

The only way to respond to that slander is by good deeds, not by defensive speaking. Unbelievers will certainly notice those good deeds. But they do not want to recognize them as such, because they will notice God therein and in no way they want to acknowledge Him.

There comes a day that they will be forced to glorify God on the basis of those good deeds. That day is “the day of visitation”. It may be that in the life of such slandering unbelievers something happens through which God speaks to their conscience. That’s when a visitation comes over them. Then they will discover that Christians have something that they lack. Then they will turn to the God Who they formerly met in the good deeds of those He owns and Whom they had rejected. Isn’t that a wonderful result of your good deeds?

Now read 1 Peter 2:9-12 again.

Reflection: Which excellencies of God do you know and how can you proclaim them?

## 1Pet 2:13-17 | The Governing Authorities

*13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 [Act] as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but [use it] as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.*

V13. After the general admonitions to have a good conduct, Peter speaks about particular relationships in which that good conduct has to become visible. In the first place he draws your attention to your relationship toward the government. Peter says that you are to submit yourself to “every human institution”. He also adds a motive to that: it is “for the Lord’s sake”. That excludes other motives. Therefore it is not the intention that you only obey the governing authorities if, according to you, it may deliver you a personal benefit.

V14. The authority is an ordinance that has been established by God (Rom 13:1). Within this authority there are different levels. There is a king as supreme authority to which believers are to submit themselves. There are also lower levels of authority, such as governors, who are, however, clothed with the authority of the king. They are representatives of the king to punish evildoers, but also to praise those who do right.

Today we know the national authority and also the lower authorities, such as the provincial and municipal authorities. The fact that they often do not consider God’s will, is not our business. God will hold them accountable for the way they performed their duty. In a general sense they indeed restrain the evil.

It can be hard to adopt the right attitude toward the governing authorities. You are submitted to them, although you have nothing to do with their appointment. As an alien and a stranger it is after all not allowed for you to get involved with the politics of the country of your sojourning. Participation in the government or even the exertion of influence on its formation does not suit you as a Christian. The Lord Jesus does not rule

either publicly yet. The kingdom of God is still a hidden kingdom, because its King is still hidden in heaven.

Therefore we cannot possibly have government duties yet. The Corinthians had forgotten that and Paul had to blame them for that (1Cor 4:8). God rules the world now by governing authorities, also by those who do not consider Him at all. The Lord Jesus is, as always, our example. This is why He also did not want to be a judge in a case of an inheritance (Lk 12:13). He was not of the world and neither are we. His time to reign is still to come and therefore ours also.

V15. It is the will of God to submit to the governing authorities. Therefore it is not a kind request for you with the option to think about it and deal with it differently. This submission is also not to happen by grinding your teeth or by having a passive behavior. The important thing is to do right. The believers whom Peter addresses and also Peter himself have to do with the wicked and cruel emperor Nero. God even allowed that under the government of this monarch, both Peter and Paul were sentenced to death.

How wicked a government or ruler may be, it is the responsibility of the believer to submit to it or to him and behave as a good resident of his realm. Doing right will result in being praised by the government, although that praise will possibly not be expressed. The government will acknowledge that Christians deliver their positive contribution to society, although their life may cause the hatred of the authorities.

Besides the praise of the government, doing right has another effect. That effect is that you silence “foolish men” who in their foolish “ignorance” accuse the believers of the most absurd crimes. So it is not about words here, but about deeds in which the value of the Christian life becomes visible.

V16. This life in submission is true freedom. Freedom is not doing whatever you want. If you do whatever you want, you only allow yourself to be controlled by your flesh, the sin, and that is bondage. That you are a free man also means that you do not put yourself under a law or that you impose or allow to impose a yoke on yourself. Freedom is that by possessing a new nature you love to do what God wants you to. Christian freedom implies that you have been freed from the bondage of sin and the law to enter the sanctuary of God.

This freedom does not mean, however, that you must not do what the government says you should do. As it is already said, it is the will of God that you obey the government. The entire will of God is written in His Word. You are to obey what God orders or prohibits in it. It is foolish to avoid that with an appeal to your freedom. It is most possible – and it is a good thing to recognize that – that you misuse this Christian freedom (Gal 5:13). You can fool yourself in this view. Therefore hold on to God’s Word as the supreme form of authority.

That sometimes puts you in another area of tension, and that is when the government asks or allows something that is contrary to God’s Word. Then it is important that you obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Thereby you can think of the acceptance of unmarried living together or of a homosexual relationship. Those are reprehensible things. If you approve of such things with an appeal on Christian freedom, you are using this freedom “as a covering for evil”. It is in contrast to the fact that you are a bondsman of God. As a bondsman of God you are accountable to do God’s will. That is not a hard and difficult thing to do for someone who delights in doing the will of God (1Jn 5:3). If you see yourself as a ‘free bondsman’, you will not allow yourself to be misguided to act in a way that is in contradiction to God’s will.

V17. The fact that you must refuse and condemn sinful *practices* does not mean that you must despise *the people* who commit these sins. Peter calls on to honor “all people”. That is because all people have been made in the likeness of God. You honor all people in doing right to all. That’s what the Lord Jesus also did when He was on earth. He, for instance, healed all who came to Him without making distinctions (Mt 8:16).

In the midst of “all people” who are to be honored, is a special company for which we have a special love. That is “the brotherhood”. That is the total of all believers and not only those, whom you are practically in contact with and certainly not only those, whom you can easily get along with. Peter says that we are to love the total of the believers, all who are children of God, without exception. Of the Christians in the first century it is said that they loved each other before they knew each other. That is a wonderful testimony and that is how it is still supposed to be today, for love has not changed.

The love for the brotherhood will not always reveal itself in the same way. You are to love the brothers, but not the fleshy lusts or the worldly mind. You do not love what seeks the destruction of the brotherhood, for example causing divisions or a false doctrine. That is the reason for the addition that you should “fear God”.

To fear God means that you have reverence for Him in everything. That is reflected in your obedience to His Word. It is also reflected in the respect that you show to the king who is appointed by Him as a representative of His authority. You will not always be able to do what the government expects you to do because you fear God, but that should in no way cause you to cease respecting the governing authorities. The recognition of the government should remain, for, as long as the church is on earth, there is no governing authority except from God (Rom 13:1).

You can summarize this section as follows. Peter addresses you as a subject of the kingdom of God. That is not an easy position because you live in a world that does not know anything about it and does not want to know anything about it. The world is seeking to make you suffer like they did to the Lord Jesus. It is impossible to be a follower of Christ without thereby evoking the resistance of the world.

As His disciple you are submitted to His authority of Whom Peter says that you have to sanctify Him as Lord in your heart (1Pet 3:15). You are dealing with His authority in your life. But He has also placed you in authority relationships. These authorities come from Him. Even though these powers are so much against God, they are God’s ministers. We submit to them as if we were submitting directly to the Lord.

Now read 1 Peter 2:13-17 again.

Reflection: In which situations do you have to subject yourself to the government and when do you have to obey God more than men?

## **1Pet 2:18-21 | To Follow in the Steps of Christ**

*18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this [finds] favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer [for it] you patiently endure it, this [finds] favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,*

V18. After Peter showed you the authority relationship of you as resident of your country of residence toward the government, he now draws your attention to another authority relationship. He will now talk about the authority relationship between “servants” and “masters”. As the government as an organ of authority is a consequence of sin, so it is with the relationship of authority between ‘servants’ and their ‘masters’.

There is also a distinction. The government is appointed by God as a judiciary authority (Gen 9:1-6). Regarding the relation of a servant toward his master it is different. God never meant to make a man to be a servant of another man. However, God does not take away the consequences of sin, but gives instructions on how men, who confess their sin can live to His honor right in those consequences. Regarding slavery, God gives room for the slave to become free, should he have the opportunity to (1Cor 7:22). For the servant who has no opportunity for that God has something else. That servant gets a special opportunity, especially in his work as a servant, to show what it is to be a Christian.

Although Peter speaks about ‘servants’ and not about slaves, the position of servants is similar to those of slaves. That becomes evident from the word ‘master’ that literally means ‘despot’, which implies that such a person has unlimited power and that he is the absolute ruler of his house. A servant belongs to the house management and he therefore has more contact with his master than other slaves. That only makes the danger to rebel or manipulate greater. Therefore Peter admonishes them here to submit to their masters with all respect.

In order to prevent them from excuses he says in addition that this does not only apply to the “good and gentle” masters, but also to “those who are unreasonable”. It is not that hard to be submissive to a good and gentle master. But it takes a whole lot more to be submissive to a harsh master. For such masters the servants are nothing more than living tools that they have available for themselves, with whom they can deal according to their wishes. Especially when servants have an “unreasonable” master, they are in a position “to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit 2:10).

You can apply what is said here about servants and masters to what we call today ‘employees’ and ‘employers’, although this comparison is only partially applicable. As it is already said, in the days of Peter a master was someone who had absolute power over his servant. He could do with him whatever he wanted, while the servant had no right or any opportunity to defend himself against it. Today there are numerous opportunities for an employee to defend himself against certain labor circumstances. He even has the right to strike. Nothing like this was possible in those days.

The circumstances may have changed, but the principles that the Scripture brings forward here are still fully effective today. Therefore the believing employee ought not to use his right to strike. He is not appealed to strike, but to work. The pay he receives should not come from the strike fund, but should be earned by working for it (2Thes 3:10). Peter therefore does not speak about the *rights* of the servant, but about his *duties* and especially about his *attitude* toward his master.

V19. When you are the submissive person in a relationship, while your superior is ‘unreasonable’ and treats you unjustly, you can adopt different attitudes. You can resist or endure this grief. You read here what God expects from you. It is said here that the injustice that is done to you, makes you sad. Therefore it is important that the injustice that is done to you does not make you obstinate. The attitude that adorns you as a Christian is bear up under sorrows.

You bear up “for the sake of conscience toward God”, which means because you know what God expects of you. If you would respond otherwise, you would be defending your right, but at the same time go against your conscience. ‘Bear up under sorrows’ is foolish in the eye of the world,

but God's Word calls that "favor" when you are "suffering unjustly". In this way you follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus Who endured in a perfect way.

Isn't it a great grace to be like Him? If you endure 'grief' it is a proof that God's grace is at work in you. It gives you the opportunity to proclaim the excellencies of God as they became visible in Christ.

V20. In case the servant would rebel, he would also have to face suffering, because his master would beat him. Then those whips would be his just reward, for rebellion is a sin. Even when a person suffers like that, he may be persistent in his attitude of rebelliousness and he may become even more rebellious than ever. That gives no credit to God. Such an attitude may be right for people who only think of their own rights and want to get their own way, people who have the idea they should defend themselves.

Such an attitude is far away from the grace that God has for anyone who is aware that he is totally dependent on God and has no right to anything. It is a joy for God to connect Himself to you if you suffer like that, because it reminds Him of the suffering that His Son has endured. If you have a harsh employer, it is God's training school for you to make you more like the Lord Jesus. Isn't that what you also eagerly want? That is what God has in mind for you if He brings you in a situation where you suffer because of your conscience.

V21. This suffering is an inseparable part of your normal life as a Christian. You do not take suffering as an inevitable and very unpleasant side effect that you would prefer to avoid. I heard about a committed Christian who had once been treated wrongfully, against which he rebelled. He came to a confession of this wrong response when an older sister asked him: 'Is that all you've learned from Golgotha?' In God's Word the question comes to us: "Why not rather be wronged? (1Cor 6:7)? To suffer injustice is not something you and I can do naturally. That is something we have to learn. The question is whether I want to and whether you want to.

Suffering goes together with your call as a Christian. To know what endurance and suffering mean and how you can learn that, your eye is fixed on Christ. Only when suffering and enduring is related to Him, it is valuable and makes your heart happy, how great your suffering may be. Christ has



suffered because He in no way gave in to the evil that is in the world and because He didn't want anything more than going God's way. The way He went through the world is an example for us. He did not sin by deeds nor by words because He was totally in the will of God and put all things in the hand of His Sender, of Whom He knew that He judges righteously.

When it is written here that Christ has "suffered" as an "example" for us to follow, it is of course impossible to have any reference to His atoning and substitutionary suffering. We cannot follow in that. We read about the atoning and substitutionary suffering of Christ in verse 24. The suffering in which He is an example for you to follow, refers to His whole life before the cross. All the time of that life was 'suffering'.

He was living in a sinful atmosphere in an unclean world. He was tempted by satan. He was hated by men in return to His love for them. At the same time He went through this suffering "that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest" for you (Heb 2:17; 4:15), for He knows all trials from His own experience. In His whole way on earth you have an example that you can follow. If you do that, you fulfill your call. That is God's purpose with your life.

If you want to know how to follow the example of Christ, you couldn't do better than study the Gospels diligently. There you see how the Lord has responded to all suffering that was done to Him in whatever way. The word 'example' was used as an indication for writing models that children had to copy, in order to learn to write and also for drawings from which they had to trace the lines. That's how you should look at the Lord as an example to learn how to follow Him.

Do not follow Him at a distance, like Peter once did, which caused him to deny his Lord (Lk 22:54). You are only able to follow the example of Christ by walking closely behind Him. Then you will be able to follow in His steps. You see, as it were, the imprint of His footsteps in the sand and you put your feet in it. The more you fall behind, the more the imprint of His footsteps fades. If you walk closely behind Him, His example will remain clear and in that way you move with sure step toward the goal.

Now read 1 Peter 2:18-21 again.

Reflection: How can you follow the steps of Christ in your situation?

**1Pet 2:22-25 | Live for Righteousness**

*22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

V22. With reference to the example that the Lord Jesus has left us to follow, Peter points at what the Lord did not do and what He did do. What He did not do is related to Himself and to the people around Him. What He did do is related to His Father.

As it is said in the previous section, you see the example of the Lord in an outstanding way in the Gospels. These Gospels were not available or were only recently in circulation in the days of Peter. What his readers knew, were the scriptures of the Old Testament. To show to them the example of the Lord, Peter quotes from Isaiah 53 (Isa 53:9). In that magnificent chapter Isaiah prophetically writes comprehensively and impressively about the Lord Jesus. Just read that chapter (again) yourself. Isaiah takes you by the hand and tells you about the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection and the glory of the Lord Jesus in a way that makes you forget everything around you and see only Him.

The first quotation from the book of Isaiah is related to what the Lord Jesus has *not* done. He “committed no sin”. He did not commit any sinful deed. Whatever was seen of Him, it was without sin. Sin is lawlessness (1Jn 3:4). This indicates the essence of sin and that is that there is no regard for any authority. This concerns both the authority of people above us and the authority of God. With the Lord Jesus there was the full recognition of God’s authority and also of the governments, given by God. He came to do the will of God and fully submitted to that will (Heb 10:7).

Therein He is an example for you. He committed no sin because He fully submitted to the will of God. Likewise, you will not sin if you submit fully to God’s will. That is possible, for the Lord Jesus is your life.

The best proof that He did not commit sin appears from the next quotation, wherein you read that He never spoke any deceitful word: "Nor was any deceit found in His mouth." His enemies often tried to catch Him on a wrong word. They were searching for that, as the word "found", used by Peter, makes think of. Their attempts appeared to be fruitless because He never said anything that was untrue. He only spoke what the Father told Him to speak (Jn 12:50).

How about you? Can that be said of you too, that no deceit was ever found in you? I know a believer who honestly acknowledges how difficult it is for him not to lie. He says that lying had become a second nature to him. He has confessed his sins and really wants to live with the Lord, but he still sometimes suffers the consequences of that and has to admit that he has fallen back in his old pattern of lying. The Lord wants also to be an Example for him. When he looks on Him and learns from Him, he is able to follow His footsteps in this too.

V23. The way His enemies approached Him did not stir up anything in the Lord that can be related to sin. He always replied to His adversaries in a perfectly calm and persuasive way. As a response to that they took their refuge in reviling Him. He did not revile in return. When they ultimately overpowered Him because it was God's time for that, and they made Him suffer in the most horrible way, "He uttered no threats". Instead of reviling and uttering threats in return, the Lord prayed: "Father, forgive them" (Lk 23:34).

He entrusted everything to the hands of His Father, Whom He knew as the righteous God. He was fully aware that God was going to judge everything righteously. When you have that awareness, you will surely be able to endure suffering. You can entrust everything, including the unbelievers who mock you, the intolerance you're facing, the injustice done to you, to God Who judges righteously. You may lay yourself in God's hand. In His time He will reveal the truth about everything you have done for His sake and for which you have suffered. Do you believe that?

V24. Your attention is drawn to the unique suffering of the Lord that He endured from God's side because of your sins. In this He is not an example for you. He is absolutely inimitable in this suffering. Nevertheless this

aspect of suffering must be mentioned because the Lord Jesus could have never been an example for you, had He not borne your sins.

His death is the result of the wrath of God over your sins, which He took on Himself. He took these sins away, so that you may be free now from your sins and therefore be able to take His life as an example to follow. When you, in contrast to that, still sin and in that way cause yourself much suffering, you disregard the work of the Lord Jesus. The work of Christ, accomplished for sin, is the basis to be able to follow Him. In no way you have to give in to sin.

It is also significant to point out that the Lord did not bear your sins during His life on earth. He did that only on the cross, in the three hours of darkness. The idea that during His life He already was under the wrath of God, is a great misconception. It is possible that this misconception comes out from a wrong translation of the verse. In a certain Dutch translation it says that He 'has *brought* our sins in His body on the tree.' Therein lies the suggestion that He already bore the sins during His life and then brought them to the cross. As it is already said, this is not true. During His life the Lord Jesus was fully and perfectly pleasing to God, Who more than once spoke that out too (Mt 3:17; 17:5).

So it is clear that the Lord Jesus has borne your sins in the three hours of darkness and received God's judgment on it. There He died in your place and you have died with Him there. You have died to sin. Sin has no power over you anymore, you do not have to give in to it anymore. That is really an awesome truth! God now sees you in Christ and He accounts to you what He did to the Lord Jesus. By the way, you cannot find anywhere in the Scripture that you *have to* die to sin. You *have* died, you *are* dead. If you see yourself as God sees you, sin will in no way get a chance in your life to express itself.

Instead of giving sin the opportunity in your life, through the work of Christ you are able to "live to righteousness". Your life is not focused anymore on deserving righteousness, but on being allowed to show in your life the righteousness that you have received in Christ. You are now able to live in accordance to the right of God. That new life attitude is the result of

the “wounds” of the judgment that struck the Lord Jesus by the chastising hand of God.

By ‘His wounds’ you therefore must not think of the floggings inflicted on Him by the soldiers of Pilate. It goes without saying that those wounds couldn’t possibly have caused your salvation and redemption. Everything that men have done to the Lord Jesus only made the guilt toward Him and toward God greater. No, only what *God* has done to the Lord Jesus in the judgment on the sins of everyone who believes, “heals” everyone who believes. Here it concerns the healing of the spiritual life that has been affected and destructed by sin.

V25. That you now have been spiritually healthy, appears from the fact that you “have returned to” the Lord Jesus as “the Shepherd and Guardian” of your soul. Like everyone has gone astray from God and has been lost (Psa 119:176), you also were. You lost the way and couldn’t find it back. Then the good Shepherd came to give His life, that you may find your way back. The sword of God’s judgment was awakened against the Shepherd (Zec 13:7), God’s Associate, and it struck Him instead of you. In that way the way to return to the Shepherd had been opened. Now you have returned to Him.

You have found the Shepherd back, which means that the ‘Shepherd’ found you. He wants to lead your further life and does not want you to be in lack of anything (Psa 23:1). He is also the ‘Guardian’ of your soul. He guards over it. If you stay with the Shepherd, following Him, He will keep you as the Guardian of your soul in peace and health.

Now read 1 Peter 2:22-25 again.

Reflection: What is the difference between the suffering of the Lord Jesus from the side of men and from the side of God?

## 1 Peter 3

### **1Pet 3:1-6 | The Wife in Marriage**

*1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be [merely] external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.*

V1. The words “in the same way” with which chapter 3 begins, refer to a verse of the previous chapter (1Pet 2:18). Just like servants must be submissive to their masters, even if it is an unreasonable master, a wife must be submissive to her husband, even if she has a husband who doesn’t live according to the Word. The submissive attitude of the wife toward her husband is today completely abnormal. In the world the wife is told not to be submissive at all, but that she has her own rights, with which she has to defend herself.

When in marriage the husband doesn’t consider God and His Word, unfortunately the wife is often used as a utensil. In spite of a humiliating treatment, the believing wife finds the strength to be submissive to her husband from her relationship with the Lord. Biblical submissiveness is a proof of great spiritual strength.

By her relationship with the Lord Jesus she will get strength to be of help to her husband, for which God has meant her (Gen 2:18). That means that the husband is the one who is ‘needy’. It is not an inferior position when you are a help. How could that be when you consider that God calls Himself the Help of His people (Deu 33:7; Psa 33:20)?

It is good to keep in mind that Peter writes about relationships as they are in the kingdom of God. Those relationships are radically opposed to the relationships prevailing in the world. That also goes for the relationship in marriage between husband and wife. When that relationship comes under pressure because the husband does not listen to the Word, the wife ought not to lecture her husband. How hard that may be for her, God's Word says here that she ought not to do that.

She has another means available and that is her behavior, which means her way of life as a Christian woman in the daily care for the household. This does not primarily involve the technical performance of actions, such as keeping the house clean and making sure that husband and children are well fed and well dressed. The most important thing is her mind in doing these things. Does she do these things reluctantly or with the love of the Lord in her heart?

It surely will be difficult to keep on nourishing her husband and children with the good mind without her ever receiving any compliment. It is also difficult, even when you know better, to still remain silent. The temptation is great to lecture her husband when he makes things difficult for her again. After all she knows from the Scripture how a husband is supposed to approach his wife. Nevertheless she may not do that. Unbelieving husbands or husbands who disobey the Word, really do not tolerate their wife to call them to account for their conduct.

The perfect model for the wife here is also the Lord Jesus. In every relationship He has taken the right place. Therefore He did not lecture the older people, but asked them questions and replied to their questions. He knew everything perfectly better, still He took the right place (Lk 2:47). That place He also took toward His fallible parents (Lk 2:51).

V2. There is another danger for the wife to fall into and that is making use of her natural charms to win her husband's favor. That's why Peter speaks about a "chaste conduct", which means a pure conduct, a conduct that is free from the impurity that rules the world. She ought not to ignore her obligations by not giving her husband also in sexual view what is related to a marriage (1Cor 7:3-5). But she ought not to use the needs of her husband to manipulate him.

Because she has this means available and also knows how to use it, her behavior must be “respectful”, that she may do nothing that gives a wrong picture of the Lord and His Word. What God’s Word addresses here to the wives who find themselves in such a situation is not easy to follow, but it is certainly the way to be blessed. Such a behavior does not remain unnoticed by her husband and will cause that he “may be won” (verse 1) for the Lord.

V3. The adornment of the wife is in external things which are natural for her. It is her weakness to even more strongly emphasize the beauty that she has by nature. In that way she is so occupied with her appearance that she hasn’t got the right view anymore of who she is for the Lord. It is about the wife here as a disciple of the Lord and the question is where the heart is focused on. Is her heart focused on pleasing Him or on pleasing men? She is certainly allowed to adorn herself for her own husband, but she must not be coquettish. She must not stand out by because of excessive attention to her appearance. The true adornment does not lie in the external.

You may ask yourself indeed what people notice, what moves them, when they come into contact with you. Do you make an impression by your appearance, or by your brown skin that is tanned by the sun or by the sunbed? Or is it your eloquent speech or your well-shaped body? Or is it the rest and the joy in the Lord that you radiate?

As means for a wife to draw people’s attention to her appearance, Peter mentions the nicely braiding of the hair, the rings and the golden necklaces that a woman wears and the stylishly or perhaps even provocative clothing. He warns that this should not be so for the believing wife (1Tim 2:9-11).

V4. All outward adornment is corruptible, transient. The hidden person, the “gentle and quiet spirit”, is not transient, but everlasting. That is precious to God and therefore imperishable. It is about things that remain and not about things that are transient.

We live in a time wherein external beauty is adored. It is considered important how you come across. Do not focus on a youthful beauty. That is just temporary. Realize well that the outer man is decaying. By growing



older all youthful beauty fades away and turns into wrinkles. Therefore it is important to realize that God sees the heart.

The most beautiful thing about a man is his inner beauty that consists of a gentle and quiet spirit. Someone's character is much more the true man than his appearance. You can learn gentleness from the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:29). A quiet spirit is also typical of Him, Who also inwardly never resisted against the circumstances in which He was.

V5. This imperishable adornment is not an invention for the time Peter and his readers live in. In former times this was the adornment of women who did not live for here and now, but for the future. That means that it is about timeless matters here. These women are called "holy women", for they lived in separation from the world and focused on God, in Whom they "hoped" for the future.

Such a mind of separation from the world and hope in God is still important today as it was in those days. If you possess that, it is not difficult to be submissive. Your conduct will then be determined by what God has said. He is more than worthy of your trust. If He has determined your place in marriage as a place of submission and you really take that place, the true adornment becomes visible, "which is precious in the sight of God".

V6. From the 'holy women' from the past Peter mentions an example. He points to Sarah and says about her that she "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (Gen 18:12). This example is not meant to make known that the wife should address her husband as 'lord'. The point is that Sarah felt no shame to call her husband 'lord'. The purpose of this example is to show that the wife should show toward her husband an attitude of owed respect. The fact that she obeyed him also does not mean that she was his servant.

The submission or obedience of a wife doesn't mean that a husband ought not to listen to his wife. Wives are given to their husbands to keep them from foolishness. We also have an example of that from the life of Abraham. Sarah once told him to do something. When he refused to listen to her, God told him that he had to listen to her (Gen 21:12).

This example is an illustration of the relationships in the marriage of the Christian and here it is specifically of the Christian woman. If she adopts the attitude toward her husband that Sarah adopted toward Abraham, she

resembles Sarah spiritually and therefore can be called one of “her children”. She therefore shows her nature and mindset. Therefore wives who follow Sarah in this, will also show that by doing right. Thereby they do not have to be “frightened by any fear”, for they who do right and therein do the will of the Lord, can be sure to be guarded by God.

Now read 1 Peter 3:1-6 again.

Reflection: What do you like most about a Godly wife?

**1Pet 3:7-12 | Husbands – All of You**

*7 You husbands in the same way, live with [your wives] in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. 8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. 11 "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. 12 "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."*

V7. After the teaching for the wives, now follows the teaching for the husbands. Also this teaching starts with "in the same way" (verse 1), for also the husband ought to be submissive. It applies to him that he ought to be submissive to the institution of marriage and ought to take his place therein that is in accordance to God's thoughts.

The husband has to "live ... in an understanding way" with his wife. The word 'live' means all his dealings with her and not only the sexual contact. In his dealings with her he should not be guided by his passions, but by the insight he has in her person. Therefore he has to gain 'understanding of' her. He must be willing to invest in her, doing his best to understand her.

It is a well-known and at the same time shameful fact that husbands often have more insight in technical matters than in their wives. That's also due to their selfishness. Husbands think that wives are like themselves and have a poor ability to empathize with the emotions of their wives.

The wife is "someone weaker" or "a weaker vessel". By 'vessel' is meant 'body' (2Cor 4:7; 1Thes 4:4). The wife is weaker in physical and emotional sense, but not in spiritual sense. Think of a woman like Deborah who led an army. The point here is that she is weaker of the body and the emotions

that are related to it. Husbands should be aware of the fact that a woman is different therein and that's what should determine their attitude toward them. It is not supposed to give them a feeling of superiority that makes them arrogantly look down on their wife. No, the husband has to understand that she has got a lot that he is missing and therefore he should show her honor.

An extra reason to show her honor and not to treat her as an inferior, is the fact that together with him she is "a fellow heir of the grace of life". She also received part of life by grace. This life will be fully lived in the millennial kingdom of peace, which is the inheritance. God makes no difference between men and women in the share He gives each of His own in the inheritance.

Husbands often behave themselves as rulers and forget that they are head. They also forget that ruling is still to come and that then also the wives will rule. If women have served the Lord more faithfully, they will receive a greater part in ruling. The husband should look at his wife as God sees her.

The "prayers", that is the contact with God, will be "hindered" if the husband does not treat his wife well. The husband's disparagement of the wife will negatively affect the prayer life. Then the prayer will have no power or it will be totally ignored. That is a serious situation. It is God's purpose that husband and wife serve the Lord together, being occupied with His work, in which each of them personally has a part. In a sound marriage they will talk together about it and pray for it. That will prevent them from living apart from each other. The common prayer of husband and wife is therefore of great importance.

V8. With the words "to sum up", after the servants (1Pet 2:18) and the marriage partners (1Pet 3:1-7), the last group is addressed. It concerns "all of you", which is the company of all believers. It goes without saying that also the previous groups belong to those. All are addressed on their conduct, on how they interact and approach each other.

The most important thing is that they are "harmonious" or "of one mind". The believers live in a hostile world. The enemy is seeking to drive believers apart. The only way to be armed against that, is to be of one mind, which means that they all have the same goal and that is to glorify Christ.

If the believers are focused on the Lord Jesus and continually seek His interests in their dealings with each other, the enemy will have no chance to succeed to cause division. On the contrary, in this way they will gain victories over the enemy.

Their mind will make them “sympathetic” with believers who are suffering and also with people who are lost. To sympathize with others is to have compassion with those who are in need and trying to be of support for them. That especially applies with regard to fellow believers. We ought to love them with “brotherly” love. It is a true joy to belong, in the midst of a hostile world where blind hatred and cold feelings determine the climate, to a companionship where love abundantly determines the atmosphere.

When believers meet one another at meetings or at their homes, they should have the same experience as one has when he is freezing outside, enters a room where the warmth overwhelms him like a blanket. This is the experience an unbeliever also should have when he comes into contact with a believer.

The companionship of believers ought to radiate ‘kindheartedness’ to anyone who is there. It is the opposite of an attitude that frightens and repels. It is a conduct that others feel attracted to and feel accepted.

That conduct does not fit with arrogance that makes the other person feel to be given a favor. No, kindheartedness goes hand in hand with ‘humbleness in spirit’, for a believer knows that he himself is an object of the kindheartedness of God and the Lord Jesus. Everything that is asked here of the believers is perfectly seen in the life of the Lord Jesus.

V9. He also did not return “evil for evil” or “insult for insult”. His response to every evil that was done to Him and all the words by which people insulted Him, was blessing. If you want to be like Him, ask Him to enable you to respond as He did.

An extra exhortation to be like Him in this view, is that you may know that you “were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing”. You also did not partake of that in your past. Now you do. Do you also grant others to partake of that? The Lord granted it for you. Then you must follow Him in this view and wish for other people that they will also

partake of the blessing of the millennial kingdom of peace, for that is the meaning of inheriting the blessing.

V10. The blessing of the kingdom of peace is not only something that we will enjoy in the future. It is now already possible to enjoy the true life and to see good days. Who wouldn't want that? Even the unbelievers want that. You can hear that wish in the salutation that we as people use by saying 'good day' to one another. To truly have good days according to the rich content that is meant here and by which it is only possible, Peter quotes a few verses from Psalms 34 (Psa 34:13-17).

Do you want "to love and see good days", then it is necessary that you do not use your mouth for speaking evil and deceitful things. That is quite something, isn't it? In any case, it excludes that a man who has no new life, can ever enjoy true life and see good days. Only those who have that new life, that is the life of God, can bring that into practice. If you remain close to the Lord, you are able to fulfill that.

V11. Also the other conditions in this section are important. They consist of something negative and of something positive. The negative thing is that you must turn away from evil and the positive thing is that you do good. You see that the negative thing is followed by the positive thing. Your life is not meant to be characterized by everything that you do not do, but that it is marked by doing what is good.

Then you read about what the good consists of. The point is that you seek peace intensively. You must pursue it; therefore you must fully commit yourself to do it. Peace is not only the absence of war. It is the inward rest as a result of the fellowship with God in going His way, with the confidence that He takes care of what is needed and protects against dangers. This peace is constantly under pressure, for circumstances can take away that peace from you. That's why you are to pursue it.

V12. To encourage you in this, the quote continues with focusing on the Lord. You may know that His eyes are always on you. He sees that you desire to enjoy what He gives to you. He also knows that there are forces and powers that threaten you and that they are much stronger than you are. If you are also aware of that, you will call on Him for help. You may

know that His ears are open to your prayers. He hears you and defends you against those who seek to harm you.

Now read 1 Peter 3:7-12 again.

Reflection: How can you be a blessing to your environment?

### **1Pet 3:13-18 | Suffer For Righteousness**

*13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always [being] ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*

V13. After the promise in the previous verse you might be thinking that nothing can happen to you. That's how Peter also puts it in verse 13. As soon as you make an effort to do good (or: for the Good, that is the Lord Jesus) the Lord will stand beside you. Nevertheless it can happen that while you are doing good and are living righteously, you do not see good days. Sometimes even the reverse seems to be true from what Peter says here, for you see that people who do good are suffering and that people who do evil are doing well. That has to do with the way God reigns the world.

The reign of God could best be called an indirect way of reigning. That is in connection with the fact that the Lord Jesus does not openly reign yet, as that will be the case in the millennial kingdom of peace. Then He will directly judge the evil and directly reward the good. As things stand today, you live as a righteous one in the midst of unrighteous people who also are in charge.

V14. It would be a normal thing that the authorities reward the right and punish the wrong. However, more often the opposite happens. You see that in this verse. But that does not mean that your fate depends on what unrighteous people do to you. Your life is in God's hand to Whom you have entrusted your life. If you look at your circumstances in this way, you know that nothing gets out of hand, but that He is above everything.



Then it may seem that you are the loser, but you know that you belong to Him Who is the Victor. That will ultimately become visible. Also with the Lord it seemed like everything went the wrong way, but He has triumphed. It still does not seem to be like that if you look around you, but if by faith you look upward and forward, you know that God ultimately will punish all evil and reward all good.

After all, whatever harm men can do to you, it only affect your body anyway (Mt 10:28). Your soul has been bought by the blood of the Lord Jesus and that's how you became His property that nobody can ever snatch out of His hand (Jn 10:28-29). In that sense it is therefore surely true that nothing can happen to you. You can say by faith: 'If God is for me, who is against me?' (Rom 8:31).

So it can happen that you suffer because you live righteously in an unrighteous world. The world doesn't want to see you live in that way, for that confronts it with its own unrighteousness. That's the reason that it will persecute you. Then you suffer for the sake of righteousness. Do not let yourself be intimidated by God-hating people. They try to scare you, but they themselves are acting out of fear.

The world itself is afraid of what is going to happen, although people are outshouting their own fear. They do that by all kinds of arrogant slogans about their own strength, with which they will defend themselves against God. The world has a reason to fear the judgment, you haven't. You do not need to be confused about the course of events in the world and in your life.

V15. Your rest is not in having control over your life, like the people of the world want to control their life after their own wishes. You see how things are getting out of hand with man. Your rest is in a sanctuary outside this world and that is in Christ (Isa 8:12-13). The Lord Christ rules over everything. If you sanctify Him in your heart as Lord, which means if you give Him the all-ruling place, you will be able to fearlessly face life here and now and in the future. With 'heart' is meant the center of your existence, the control chamber from which all your motives and deeds originate (Pro 4:23).

After your heart comes your mouth. It is important to confess Him also with your mouth (Rom 10:9-10). You not only ought to give account to God, but also to people. They may ask you: 'Why do you live like that? How come that you allow people to make you suffer like that? Why do you choose to be despised?' Then you may testify to the hope you have of glory after suffering. That is what the Lord Jesus also did (Lk 24:26). Just look at Moses. Moses was expecting the reward and therefore chose rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God (Heb 11:24-26). In that way you may testify that it is worth it to suffer because you expect the glory that is to come.

Giving a defense must happen "with gentleness" and not by threatening in the sense of: 'My time will surely come.' Therefore give a defense of that with "reverence" because of your own sinful nature that is still in you. Do not boast on that great future in a way that gives the impression that you own it already and therefore you do not have to care about anything. Therefore the certainty of the hope is not supposed to make you a careless or arrogant Christian.

V16. Therefore, be sure to give your testimony with "a good conscience", which means, with a conscience that does not blame you for not having pure motives by giving your account. If you give such a defense of the hope that is in you, those who revile you because of your "good behavior in Christ will be put to shame". They may say whatever they want and they may speak of you as an evildoer, but there will be a moment that they will have to admit to their own disgrace and shame that your life is related to Christ.

V17. That you live in a relationship with Christ must of course be the cause of their reviling of your conduct and not a wrong conduct that you may possibly show. If you suffer, it ought to be by God's will. You don't have to seek suffering. But if a situation arises where you clearly see the leading of the Lord to testify of Him, then do so, even if it means bringing reproach upon you.

Not each testimony produces suffering. Sometimes you even receive honor for what you say and do. The point is that you should not suffer because of evil things. The only right way to suffer is because of doing good. If Christians suffer, it doesn't happen without the will of God. When doing

good results in suffering, be sure that it does not happen outside the will of God, yes, it is indeed God's will too. Then it can only be good, for His will for us is always a blessing.

V18. God wants to bring us to Himself. With a view to that, Christ had to suffer once for all. The Lord Jesus has suffered and indeed the heaviest suffering. It was a suffering we never would be able to endure and also never have to endure. It is also a one-time suffering that never has to be repeated. The suffering that He went through for sins has an everlasting effect. Due to what He has suffered, the sins of all who believe in Him have forever been removed and by His sacrifice they all have been made perfect forever (Heb 10:14).

He has taken the place of the unjust. He could take that place because He Himself was the Just. He did not have to suffer for His own sins, for He committed no sin (1Pet 2:22). Therefore He was perfectly suited to endure the sufferings for the sins of others. In this way He opened the way to God for sinners. He was willing to endure this suffering to bring you to God, in His presence, where you would never have been able to come or would have dared to come.

The suffering of the Lord Jesus meant to Him to suffer till death. But He did not remain in death, He was made alive again. He could be "put to death in the flesh" because He came in the flesh (1Jn 4:2), meaning that He, Who is the eternal Son, became Man. God sent Him "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3). It goes without saying that 'the flesh' here indicates 'the body' and not the sinful flesh. His appearance on earth in a body has given man the opportunity to kill Him. Man didn't want Him, Who so perfectly lived for righteousness.

But God wanted Him. Due to His perfectly dedicated life to God, God could do nothing else – and it was also the joy of His heart – than make Him alive. He did that by His Spirit, the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4). While the world doesn't see Him anymore and thinks that He is dead, you know Him not according to the flesh (2Cor 5:16), but according to the Spirit, meaning through the Holy Spirit and in a spiritual way.

Now read 1 Peter 3:13-18 again.

Reflection: How can you suffer for the sake of righteousness?

### 1Pet 3:19-22 | Baptism and Its Consequences

*19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits [now] in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through [the] water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.*

V19. The Jews whom Peter writes to, need to learn to look on Christ by what the Holy Spirit is showing them (Jn 16:13-14). That Christ is not physically present, but works by His Spirit may be strange to them. But that is not a new thought. As an illustration for that Peter refers to Noah and the work of the Spirit in his time. *Christ* preached in the Spirit through Noah to the people in the midst of whom he lived (Gen 6:3).

With “spirits [now] in prison” is not meant the spirits of dead unbelievers, but just simply the people who lived in the days of Noah. It is foolish to presume that Christ still has a preaching for dead people (cf. Lk 16:23-26). That there is mention of ‘spirits in prison’ means that these people were under the power of the great evil spirit, the devil. The devil was holding their spirit in prison (cf. 2Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2). He who has control over someone’s spirit, has power over the whole person. The preaching of Noah through the Spirit of Christ was addressed to these people who were the spiritual prisoners of satan.

V20. Noah warned them of the judgment of the flood that was going to come on these disobedient, or unbelieving, people. Each day that his preaching lasted, was a testimony of the “patience of God”. The judgment had to come, but God was still waiting, while the ark was constructed, that each one who wanted to come, could enter and be saved. And what was the ‘harvest’? Only “eight persons” entered the ark. Peter emphasizes the small number by mentioning again that there were “a few”, because humanity consisted of millions of people back then anyway.

This all had to serve as an encouragement for the readers. They also were with a few. They could not share their faith in a glorified and also invisible

Lord with the masses of their compatriots. On the contrary, they were an object of persecution and mockery of their compatriots.

The purpose of this section is to encourage you if you have to suffer because of ungodly people, slanderers and mockers. Noah preached for a long time, but he did not give up. God is patient and therefore He was waiting. That applies also to you. If you suffer, you know that the reason for that is the patience of God. With a view to the salvation of the ungodly, God tolerates it when you have to suffer. If you find it hard at times and if the (apparently) easier life of the world is attracting you, I ask you if you would want to change with the ungodly. To make a well-considered choice you must watch the end of those who seem to be prosperous.

Asaph, who also had an inner struggle like that, writes about that in Psalms 73. Just read that psalm if you also wrestle with these things (Psa 73:1-28). I can tell you that I would rather not stand on the side of those who have a big mouth now, for they will be judged after that and end up in hell. I would rather stand on the side of Christ and suffer now, to be later with Him in glory.

Noah and his family were "brought safely through [the] water", that is the water of the flood through which the rest of the people died. The water of the judgment was a means for him to be transferred from the old world to the new world. He was able to be saved in this way because he had a protection against the judgment and that was the ark. In such a way you have also been transferred into a new world. Concerning you the judgment came on Christ. Because you are in Him you have not died in judgment.

V21. Of this event baptism is a type. Baptism is called an 'anti-type' because it is a type of another type, that of the flood. Baptism and flood belong together. The water of baptism and the water of the flood have the same meaning. Both waters speak of death. We are saved by the means of which baptism is a symbol or a type: the judgment of death. How can a person be saved through death? That is possible when another person goes into death instead of him. That is what the Lord Jesus did. Through baptism you show in a type what has happened to you when Christ died for you.

Through baptism you publicly give a testimony that you have transferred from the one party, that of satan, to the other party, that of the Lord Jesus,

the rejected One. The suffering that you are going through is the consequence of that. The water of baptism doesn't give any meaning for the body as such. The question is your conscience toward God. When you are baptized, you place yourself before God and you say to Him that you want to follow the Lord Jesus. You also ask Him to keep you from doing anything that is unrighteous, because you want to have and to keep a good conscience.

From then your way stands in connection with the risen Jesus Christ. You have left the world and sin behind you. They symbolically are buried in the water grave of your baptism (Rom 6:3). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is now the connection that determines everything. Through His resurrection a new world of blessing and life has been disclosed for you. How can it be possible that you would still want to live in connection with the old world over which you have acknowledged the judgment?

V22. The fact that this is all still in faith, doesn't diminish anything of its reality. It will all soon become visible for the natural eye too. Till then, you may know that He with Whom you are now joined, is at the right hand of God in heaven. He has taken the place of the highest authority. All things are subjected to Him. You still cannot see that around you, but you see Him to Whom all things are subjected (Heb 2:8). Is not seeing Him in all His glory and majesty the greatest motive for enduring the suffering you sometimes have to endure?

Now read 1 Peter 3:3:19-22 again.

Reflection: What is the meaning of baptism and what are the consequences of baptism?

## 1 Peter 4

### **1Pet 4:1-9 | The Time Past and the Rest of the Time**

*1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient [for you] to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In [all] this, they are surprised that you do not run with [them] into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign [you]; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to [the will of] God. 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober [spirit] for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.*

V1. The first verse of this chapter is directly connected to what is previously said. You can derive that from the word “therefore”. That word makes clear that a conclusion follows. When Christ was on earth He “suffered in the flesh”. That does not refer to His work on the cross, but to His life in the midst of people who were hostile to God, how religious as they may have been. He did not give in to their carnal desires and in no way He could be tempted to sin. The will of God was decisive for His life and to Him He entrusted Himself. The result of that was that He had to endure sufferings. He suffered because He was fully focused on God and did not want to have anything to do with sin. He did not want to do anything independently from His God. You must arm yourself with the same purpose.

The appeal to arm yourself proves that there is a battle to be fought. If you want to win the battle in the same way the Lord Jesus has won, you must arm yourself. The weapon is not a material weapon, but it consists of a purpose or a mind (Darby Translation). The content of that purpose

or mind is Christ and that He has suffered in the flesh. If you are tempted to sin, then you should take out this weapon: the mind that Christ has suffered in the flesh. He has suffered and He has endured and has overcome.

The essence of this mind is that Christ has endured the suffering in the flesh, because He lived in the full confidence of His Father in doing His will. Satan tempted Him by offering Him the kingdom without having to suffer for it (Mt 4:8-10). Men have tempted Him by trying to make Him King without Him having to suffer for it (Jn 6:15). The Lord has rejected each temptation and chose to suffer because this was God's way to glory.

One who resembles the Lord Jesus in this is Joseph. Joseph also suffered because he did not want to have any part in sin. He was not willing to cooperate with the sins of his brothers and he neither wanted to cooperate with the sin that Potiphar's wife wanted to commit with him (Gen 37:2b; 39:9). Due to that he suffered in the same way as the Lord Jesus for the sake of righteousness. You are to arm yourself with the same mind, meaning that you choose to suffer instead of sinning.

The point is that you do not give in to sin, what the world continually seeks to tempt you to. If you suffer in the flesh, that is in the body, it is clear that you have dealt with sin and that you do not surrender to it. When you do surrender to it you do not suffer. Enjoying sin in not suffering. You can choose to enjoy sin (Heb 11:25), but you must consider that it is a *passing* pleasure that has a bitter and often permanent after taste. Christ did not have anything to do with sin and due to that He suffered. The same goes for you, who follows Him, as you have confessed, as I hope, with your baptism.

V2. With your conversion and baptism "the rest of the time" has come to live "for the will of God". You have thrown away enough time in the past by trying to fulfill your lusts. May I ask you how you spend your time now in contrast to the past? It cannot be the case that you just go on to excessively consume movies and other kinds of entertainment, can it? You should have ceased being obsessed with sports and recreation together with the world, shouldn't you? You are not continually occupied anymore with making your house more and more comfortable, are you?



It is not always about things that are wrong in themselves. The point is that these things determine the life of people who do not consider the will of God, but live after their own desires.

V3. You also belonged to those people in the past and you also lived the way they do. That must have changed when you turned to God and surrendered yourself to the Lord Jesus, hasn't it? Since then your life has had a totally different principle and a totally different content and a totally different purpose. If that is reality for you, it will be seen by a real change in using your time.

For you have spent enough of your past lifetime in carrying out "the desire of the Gentiles". Away with that! That time is over! Peter reminds us of that time. Sometimes it is necessary and useful to be reminded of the past. That is not to blame you again for your sins, but to show you from what you have been redeemed, from what kind of a horrible pit you were saved. It will help you to increase in gratefulness toward God and in your dedication to the Lord Jesus.

Just look at the desire of the Gentiles, what they want, and compare that to the will of God, what He has planned for you. The Gentiles live in total rebellion against God and they fully follow their own desires in which they satisfy their lusts in the most perverted way. They do not allow anyone to tell them to do anything and they swallow all unrighteousness like water. They surrender themselves to everything that can satisfy the physical and spiritual needs. Thereby they spare no one and also give up the health of their own body. Unlimited sex, uncontrollably consuming food and drink and a total surrender to demons are the ingredients of this life of debauchery.

V4. They are surprised that you do not join them in "the same excesses of dissipation". Your new conduct is strange and incomprehensible for those who used to be your friends in the past. Because you do not have part in their dealings anymore, they will talk all kinds of evil about you. They do not understand that God takes care of you. If you have received something they may for instance talk around that you have stolen it. Do not mind about that at all and do not worry about it.

V5. You can surrender it to Him Who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23). He is ready to “judge the living and the dead”. The judgment on the living will be carried out by the Lord Jesus when He comes to establish His kingdom (Mt 25:31). He will carry out the judgment on the dead between the end of the millennial kingdom of peace and the beginning of eternity (Rev 20:11). Both the dead and the living will have to “give account” to Him with Whom they did not want to have anything to do and they therefore mocked, persecuted and slandered those who confessed Him.

V6. With a view to that judgment a joyful message was already proclaimed in the past. The Scripture calls that the “everlasting gospel” (Rev 14:6-7). The content of that gospel is that each one who acknowledged himself guilty before God and accepted God’s judgment over his life as a man in flesh as just, was made alive by the power of the Holy Spirit. So through all ages it has been the Holy Spirit Who gives life and in that way enables us to partake of the risen Christ and His future. This is an encouragement for the believers to whom Peter writes and it is also an encouragement for you who also has accepted the gospel, though it is both for those and for you in its richer form: the gospel of grace.

In verse 5 you have read that the Lord Jesus is ready to come and judge all ungodliness (cf. Jam 5:9). That means that the end of all things is near. That is already the situation when Peter writes this letter. How much more does that apply to the time we live in. That it still has not come, is due to the patience of God, Who does not wish for any to perish (2Pet 3:9).

V7. When you think of the end that is near, it may encourage you. It will not last long anymore and then all boasting of man will cease. Also everything, in which a man may put his hope, will come to an end. Hereby you may think of his self-made religion with his self-shaped imaged of God. Materialism and spiritualism will be judged at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Then also all slandering, mocking and persecution will come to an end for those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus.

When the Lord Jesus comes and when He has judged all unrighteousness, the millennial kingdom of peace can begin. If you focus on that, it will give you strength to bear and to endure what otherwise you are not able to bear

and endure. Don't be rushed by the delusion of the day, which would lead you to act wrongly.

"Be of sound judgment", respond calmly and thoughtfully. Let yourself be led by God's Word. Keep your eyes fixed on the coming of the Lord. Then you will be able to see all things around you in its true perspective.

Be of "sober [spirit]" too, meaning that you do not allow the spirit of the age to cloud your view, but keep it pure. See everything that comes toward you in the light of God and of the future, so that you may see the things as they really are and not as they seem to present themselves to you. That watchfulness does not make you overconfident, but it leads you to "pray". The real awareness that you live in the end time will lead you to a deep dependence on God.

V8. After having presented the relationship with God like that, attention is now paid to the relationship of Christians to one another. What is important "above all", is that they have "fervent ... love for one another". A true and firm relationship among Christians is especially noticeable by the interest in one another. Then you also get to know each other in terms of both strengths and weaknesses.

In the end time it is more than ever important that the company of believers meet and encourages one another (Heb 10:24-25). True love seeks what benefits the other. Then one does not dig up the weaknesses and sins (Pro 16:27a), but on the contrary, covers them (Pro 10:12). Seeing other people's mistakes and enlarging on them is not the love of the Lord. He does not see sins anymore in those who are His, but He covers them with His love.

That does not mean that you should not call evil by its name. It certainly does mean that sin is to be judged as soon as possible and after that there is also forgiveness. Love cannot live with sin. If a brother commits a sin, love will do everything to convince him of it so that the sin can be confessed and put away (Mt 18:15). The devil will always try to cause disharmony among believers, often by using small matters. He will not succeed if we have fervent love for one another.

V9. That love will also be expressed by being "hospitable". This includes not only your friends, but precisely people who you do not know. 'Hospitality' literally means 'love for strangers'. If a believer, whom you do not

know, comes to you, you not only ought to offer him a meal, but also a home. Let him feel to be welcome and that your whole house is available to him. That doesn't mean that you should be naive, but that you must have such an attitude.

It is also for a reason that Peter adds to it that you must do it without complaint, for that can easily happen. An unexpected guest can disturb your program considerably. You may find it also awkward because you may just have cleaned up and put everything in the right order and now have to pull out all sorts of things for that strange guest. And not to mention the costs that this visit may possibly bring. Therefore, take this word to heart and do not complain or even calculate, but show an abundance of hospitality. Invite one another, receive one another and serve one another.

Now read 1 Peter 4:1-9 again.

Reflection: What is the most important thing in the end of times?

**1Pet 4:10-13 | Serve One Another as Good Stewards**

*10 As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, [is to do so] as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves [is to do so] as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*

V10. The Lord has given something to each one to serve the other. With your gift you can serve those, who are the most important people on earth to God: the companionship of believers. What is given to you to be able to do that, is called “a [special] gift” as a grace of God. Grace plays a major role in this letter. The Lord wants to use His own to pass on His grace to His own.

You are able to pass on the grace that you have received to other believers. The Lord has distributed the gifts in such a way that you are able to serve all believers and that you can be served by all believers. Therefore you are not supposed to keep the gift that you have received, for yourself, but to pass it on. Your gift is not given to you for your own pleasure or for your own honor or importance, but it ought to be useful and for the joy of the other. In that way there is an interaction between the believers. Each of the believers is a gift to all others (Eph 4:7).

If you do with the gift you have received from the Lord what the Lord wants you to do with it, you are a ‘good steward’. A steward is someone who manages something that belongs to another person. What you have received belongs to the Lord and He expects you to be faithful in making use of it (1Cor 4:1-5). He will once ask you to account for your use of it (cf. Lk 16:1-13).

What God has given of His grace is “manifold”. Hereby you should think of a multitude of proofs of grace. Haven’t you already experienced in

your life how much grace you have received? Has the Lord not often used brothers and sisters for that too?

Just think about all you owe to your brothers and sisters and thank God for arranging it this way. Have you not often been richly blessed at the gatherings and have the meetings in the homes not often been encouraging for you?

The fact the God has arranged things like that at the same time makes clear that a 'one-man-ministry' in the church is not according to His will. God did not concentrate all gifts in one person, but He gave a great diversity of gifts. Thereby He for instance gives to one the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge (1Cor 12:8-10).

V11. The gifts are divided in two main categories by Peter. The one category is 'speaking', the other category is 'serving' (cf. Acts 6:2-4). First he deals with 'speaking'. What an encouraging and edifying effect can words have on you! Speaking to edify especially happens in the meeting. Of course it should be speaking "the utterances of God" and not giving one's own opinion on certain things. It should undoubtedly be in accordance with God's Word, but it should also be according to God's will that it is said at the right time.

If it happens like that in the meeting it will be a great blessing of all attendants. Each attendant will feel himself personally addressed. That may imply that you are edified or exhorted or consoled by what is said (1Cor 14:3). It is just what you need, and God, Who guides the speaker by His Spirit in speaking 'the oracles of God', knows that. That, however, doesn't elevate the speaker above criticism, for he remains in himself a fallible person. Therefore, everything that has been said must be tested whether it is according to God's Word (1Cor 14:29).

'Serving' is distinguished from 'speaking'. 'Serving' regards to the sharing with others of the material goods. We can all serve others with the means we have. That must happen with sincere motives and not for attaining a good reputation. It should not be to one's own honor, but to God's honor. Therefore God has to give the power to do it, He has to work it in your heart.

If you are open to the will of God in both your speaking and your serving, He will make clear to you what you should say or do. He gives the gifts and also the power to use those gifts. He first gives you an order to do something and then He gives you everything you need to execute that order. It is a service that in no way can happen in one's own power, in the power of the flesh. Only then it can happen to the glory of God. The Lord Jesus is the One through Whom you are capable to do everything to God's glory. He will give the power for that forever and ever.

V12. Peter comes back to suffering. By addressing his readers as "beloved", he makes them feel his warm love. With this word "beloved" he certainly does not only indicate his own love, but he also means by that, that they are beloved of God. They may have been doubting about that because of the persecution they have to endure.

There is another warmth besides the warmth of love. That warmth is more of a heat. It is the "fiery ordeal" of the persecution that they are experiencing in their midst. The enemy wants to intimidate them and wants to bring them to deny the Lord Jesus as the glorified Lord. That persecution can cause them to start doubting the love of God. However, the suffering that comes in their midst, they should not see as something that accidentally happens to them and less as something that God sends to make their life miserable.

If people light a fire, it destroys everything that it comes into contact with. If God lights a fire, He also controls it so that it comes into contact only with what He allows to burn. The fire in which the three friends of Daniel found themselves, chose, under the guiding hand of God, only the ropes of the three friends, while it did not affect the other parts of their body; not one hair of their head was singed (Dan 3:24-27).

The fire is used by God to test the believer. The test of your faith is necessary because it purifies your faith from the elements that may cloud the faith in one way or another. Faith is clouded by, for instance, still trusting in your own power or by thinking that you need to fulfil certain conditions to gain God's favor. That all has to be removed, for you must learn to unconditionally trust in God alone.

The idea that as soon as a person comes to faith, all difficulties and worries belong to the past, is a serious misconception. The gospel is not a success formula for a life without problems. False evangelists may want you to believe that by accepting the gospel you will be healthy and wealthy and that you will gain prosperity and a good reputation. Those are liars, who bring a message that they themselves invented. If you believe such foolishness you will surely find it strange that you as a believer still have to face suffering.

The reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ is different. If you believe in it and you desire to live in that faith, you will on the contrary have to do with sufferings. Such a life identifies you with Christ. And what was His part on earth? It was nothing more than suffering, was it?

V13. Peter is encouraging you. Instead of being discouraged by suffering that is your portion because of your relationship with Christ, you may rejoice in it. You may “share the sufferings of Christ”, which of course refers only to the sufferings inflicted on Him by human beings and not to the sufferings for the atonement of sins. Sharing the sufferings of Christ, meaning going through something of which you know He also went through, gives a deeply inward joy (Acts 5:41; Lk 6:22-23). Paul very much wanted to share the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10) because he wanted to be like Christ as much as he possibly could. The more you share the sufferings of Christ the deeper you can rejoice in the joy of it now already.

This joy will extend to “rejoice with exultation” when the Lord Jesus comes in His glory. Then He will reveal Himself and will be seen by all (Rev 1:7). They will be present at that time and accompany Him with exceeding joy. The situation will be completely changed. From suffering Christians they will be changed to glorified Christians. The joy of the sufferings has not been changed, but it has been expanded to an expression of a joy tempered by nothing. It’s an exuberant expression of joy. The time of suffering is over. The time of singing has arrived (Song 2:11-12). The glory has come in the Person of Jesus Christ Who reveals Himself to the world as the Victor.

Now read 1 Peter 4:10-13 again.

Reflection: How could you serve to others and be served by others?



## 1Pet 4:14-19 | Judgment Begins With the House of God

*14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what [will be] the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

V14. The glory that is spoken about in verse 13 has not yet come. At present you may still be reviled “for the name of Christ”. It is the same suffering as the suffering that is called ‘Christ’s sufferings’ in the previous verse, but with another emphasis. There the emphasis is more on the suffering itself; it is a suffering that also Christ has endured for doing the will of God. It is the portion of each who follows Him. With the suffering ‘for the name of Christ’ the emphasis is more on the relationship with Himself.

To be reviled for His Name is a suffering that is a direct consequence of coming out for His Name in word and in deed. The world sees in the believer the representative of Christ, Who Himself, when He was here, was the great Representative of God. Due to that He experienced: “The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me” (Psa 69:9). To Him it was no disgrace and that goes also for you if you are reproached for His Name. Peter even says “you are blessed” if that happens.

The suffering of Christ and the suffering for the Name of Christ are an exceptional way of the revelation of “the Spirit of glory and of God”. In the suffering you experience that the Spirit brings you in your inner being into contact with ‘the glory’ that is His home. He is also the Spirit ‘of God’, the Spirit Who gives you the awareness of God’s full interest and support in the suffering you find yourself in.

That is without a doubt a wonderful encouragement to endure this suffering with joy. You go through an unprecedented experience of God’s

presence that others will also notice, for that Spirit “rests on you” (cf. Acts 6:15). While you’re enduring suffering on earth, you possess something that comes from the glory which connects you to it. You not only have a promise of a coming glory, but you have Him Who belongs there.

I have read the biography of a Chinese church leader who had spent twenty years in detention barracks, because of his faith in the Lord Jesus. In that book he speaks all the time about God as ‘the Present One’. To him the presence of God and His Spirit was an almost tangible reality in the midst of the suffering. They were ‘present’, he knew he was in Their presence. That gave him the strength to do the hard forced labor and to testify of his Lord and Savior toward his fellow prisoners.

V15. After presenting the privileges of suffering because of the relationship with Christ, Peter warns of a form of suffering that should not happen to you. That form of suffering is the suffering because of the sins you committed. Peter mentions some of them. The “murderer, or thief, or evildoer” are people who take or damage the life or possessions of other people (materially or spiritually).

The “troublesome meddler” doesn’t seem to fit in this list, but Peter still puts him next to these other crystal clear sins. The troublesome meddler is someone who meddles unasked in other people’s affairs. Meddling limits the room for others, it takes away the freedom of others to act according to what the Lord makes clear. The busybody is doing a work of which the devastating effects often become visible in the longer term. The world has no appreciation for it, like it has not for the other three sins. It is shameful if a person, who calls himself a Christian, has to endure such suffering.

V16. However, a person may suffer because he really behaves as a Christian, after the meaning of the name ‘Christian’. That is because he shows the features of Him to Whom the name ‘Christian’ refers, that is Christ. The name ‘Christian’ appears only here and two times in the book of Acts (Acts 11:26; 26:28). In both verses in the book of Acts the name is used by unbelievers who refer to those who testify of their faith in Christ. Therefore it is the world that came up with that name. By what Peter writes here we see that the Spirit acknowledges this name formally.

A Christian is therefore a true follower of Christ. If you suffer “as a Christian”, that is, because you are known as a follower of Christ and act as such, you need not be ashamed of it. On the contrary, you are allowed “to glorify God in this name”. Christ has always suffered for the Name of God and glorified Him therein. You are allowed to imitate Him in this. That is a great privilege.

V17. There is another reason why God uses the suffering of the persecution on behalf of His own. The time for judgment on the world is still to come. Peter speaks about that in his second letter. We will see that when we read and examine that letter together. In this first letter it is about God’s reign over His children. Therefore Peter speaks now about God’s judgment on His house, which is the church, but seen as a whole that consists of all believers who are held responsible for their behavior.

That you are a member of the church is not only a privilege, but also a great responsibility. That is what this is about. This responsibility is greater than that of the world. The church as the people of God and the house of God, as a matter of fact, confesses to know God and to obey Him. Therefore God’s judgment has to begin *here* before He judges the world (cf. Jer 25:29; Eze 9:6).

God first judges what is the closest to Him, what is most responsible (Lev 10:3; Amos 3:2) to remove what is not according to His will. He wants that the wrong should be confessed and removed. For that reason He uses the world in its persecution of His own. Therefore persecution is besides a test of faith also a speaking of God to the conscience of His people. He wants to bring His own to have the same judgment as He has. That will cause them to judge what He judges, so that they may not be judged with the world (1Cor 11:31-32).

By speaking about “us” Peter puts himself under the judgment that God executes on His house. “For [it is] time” for that judgment while the church is still on earth. To the unbeliever the time has not come yet to be judged, but that will happen in future (Pro 11:31). The execution of God’s judgment on the world contains a serious warning for us not to be absorbed in the world. The judgment on the world is still to come and it will be terrible and definite. There will be no way to escape.

V18. You are a righteous one and look what an effort God is making to bring you saved to the final goal. In the midst of all trials He continues His work in you. He guards you from falling away and from sliding into the world and He purifies your faith, so that you continue to respond to Who He is. Therefore “difficulty” here is with regard to all efforts of God to lead you safely through all dangers to finally give you the inheritance that He reserved for you (1Pet 1:4-5). That is a great encouragement.

To the world it is a great warning. That is embedded in the question “what will become of the godless man and the sinner”, that is, those who live without God and only for themselves. The answer to that question is: they will appear before the great white throne to be judged there according to their deeds (Rev 20:11-15).

V19. If you are aware of the previous you will be able to understand the admonition to, if you are suffering to God’s will, entrust your soul “to a faithful Creator”. You will surely not think of escaping the suffering by adapting yourself to the world and entrust your soul to it. The world, consisting of godless men and sinners, rushes toward judgment. Therefore it is not wise to take refuge in the world to escape suffering. You rush toward the inheritance. Then remember that the degree of suffering is the basis for the joy you will have when you may take possession of the inheritance at the revelation of the glory of Christ (verse 13).

The “faithful Creator”, your Maker, He Who completely knows you and knows how you feel, leads everything to the goal for which He has created all things. He is faithful and will achieve His goal with the world, with the inheritance and with you. On the way to His goal you are allowed, by doing good, to show that you have entrusted your whole life to Him. You do not seek to adapt yourself to the world, but you neither rejoice in the judgment that will come on the world. As long as you are here you may seek good for the people of the world, so that, in doing what is right many more will get to know Him on behalf of Whom you are working.

Now read 1 Peter 4:14-19 again.

Reflection: What does your suffering as a Christian consist of?

## 1 Peter 5

### **1Pet 5:1-5 | Care for the Flock of God**

*1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as [your] fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to [the will of] God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to [your] elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.*

V1. When Christians live in a time of persecution and suffer because of that, a lot depends on how the relationships are among them. Therefore Peter continues his teachings with admonitions for elders (verses 1-4) and younger people (verse 5). When there are frictions between both groups, they will be an easy prey for the enemy who threatens them from the outside.

There has always been the danger of frictions between older and younger people, but in our time it is greater than in former times. In the past the authoritative relationships were clear and they were generally also respected. Nowadays authority is an almost 'dirty' word. Autonomy, the free will of man, seems to be the most valuable asset, also to Christians.

Changes in authoritative relationships are taking place rapidly. Younger people increasingly see older people with their opinions as old-fashioned and liberty limiting. Older people have the opinion that younger people only want to be revolutionary, without any respect for the good achievements of the former generation or generations. Each proposal for a change is rejected in advance, because it is experienced as a threat for the old achievements to which they want to hold on. If we are willing to listen to

the teaching of Peter, then the frictions mentioned or even collisions and divisions will have no chance to have a detrimental effect on us.

Peter starts with the elders, that is, with those who have the greatest responsibility. If it comes to the relationship between elder people and younger people, the heart of the fathers must first be brought to the children and then the heart of the children can be dealt with to bring them to the fathers (Mal 4:6). Although Peter speaks as an elder and therefore speaks with authority, he at the same time speaks as an elder to his fellow elders.

The term “elders” is not a title for a special class of people with an official position in the church who are appointed by others. An elder is someone who by age, experience and wisdom of life is able to lead believers. The word ‘elder’ therefore does not indicate an official position, but it indicates an older person. That also appears from the contrast with the ‘younger people’ in verse 5.

That doesn’t mean that each believer has the same responsibility. There are older believers whose walk of life enforces authority – that is quite different from demanding authority! – and who have the care of the church at heart. These are those to whom Peter is addressing. He not only does that as a “fellow elder”, but also as someone with two special characteristics, namely as a “witness of the sufferings of Christ” and as “a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed”. Peter can testify of the sufferings of Christ that came over Him when He was on earth (Jn 15:27). He is also a partaker of the glory of Christ that He will have in His kingdom, for he has foreseen that on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk 9:28-31).

V2. As an elder and due to his education for his ministry, Peter fulfills the order of the Lord to take care of His flock (Jn 21:15-17). In the first place he does that by the means of this letter to the whole flock. In the second place he does that also by transferring his care now to the fellow elders or anyway by involving them in the care. He points out to the elders that it is about the flock of *God*. It is in no way *their* flock, as a church leader sometimes speaks about ‘my’ church.

It is also the flock that is among or with them and therefore not a flock that is beneath or below them. The elders themselves are also a part of the flock. A flock forms a whole. This is how it is with God’s people. The task of the

elders consists of their supervision over the whole flock (cf. Acts 20:28) and not giving some sheep a preferential treatment. "Shepherd the flock" consists of keeping it from dangers. Hereby you can think of the shielding from false doctrines. "Exercising oversight" implies that the flock is provided with nourishment, with what is encouraging and empowering to move on.

It is important that elders exert their spiritual authority in the right way and in the right mind. That will be the case if they fulfill the three conditions Peter mentions. They are to do it "voluntarily" and "with eagerness" and as "examples to the flock".

Each of these conditions is in contrast to something of the flesh. 'Voluntarily' is in contrast to "under compulsion". An elder must not be forced to do his task. To act compulsively or against your will is not fitting to a task of care, for then there is no love for the flock. It is about a service out of willingness. That is after God's heart, for He also did not act out of compulsion, but out of love when He gave the Lord Jesus as the good Shepherd. God loves the joyful shepherd (cf. 2Cor 9:7).

The shepherd is also not supposed to work for sordid gain. The sheep are not there for him, but he is there for the sheep. Unfortunately, you see that the church has become a house of trade. Some church leaders cry out for money and promise a lot regarding health and prosperity. The gain that shepherds are striving for may also be in increasing prestige. The chief priests and Pharisees in the days of the Lord Jesus were seeking that, while they also were out for financial profit. They wanted to enrich themselves as much as they could to the detriment of the sheep. They were shepherds who were shepherding themselves (Eze 34:2).

The opposite of that is the shepherd after God's purpose. That shepherd is willing. Willingness is the attitude to help whenever it is needed, even when it is not asked with words. If a sheep deviates, he will go after it and bring it back. He is willing to abandon his own rest for that.

V3. Elders are also not people of power. One can possess his own possession and exert power. But the church is not in possession of a man. Instead of ruling with a hard hand to make the flock behave in a desirable way, the shepherd will show how a sheep should behave. After all, the shepherd

himself is part of the flock. Spiritual authority is in the example, not in the words that are spoken. Following the Lord does not mean commanding, but showing in practice what that means. The shepherd after God's heart does not call from the rear the command: 'Forward!', but he calls out: 'Follow me!' and goes in front himself.

V4. The prospect of a great reward is presented to the elders for their work. Their eyes are focused on the coming of "the Chief Shepherd", that is the Lord Jesus. Peter is drawing the attention of his fellow elders to that, so that they may be encouraged to faithfully continue to do their often difficult and heavy task. It is a heavy order that can only be carried out with the view to the coming of the Lord and the reward that He has for those who have served in that way. All who have taken the lowest place on earth, will soon take the highest place with Him, distinguished from all others. Then they will be handed out "the unfading crown of glory" by the Chief Shepherd.

This particular encouragement for this often thankless task is certainly justified. Serving the believers is often harder than preaching the gospel to the unbelievers. Still this task is of great importance. Therefore the Holy Spirit led Peter to write these words. Let every older believer who has a task as a shepherd be encouraged by it and persevere in his task until the coming of the Lord in glory.

V5. After this exhaustive word to the elders Peter addresses the younger men. He tells them to be subject to the elders. A lot will depend on the attitude of the elders. To develop spiritually sound, the younger men need elders to be subject to them because they give the good example to them. Though also elders are not perfect people. Younger men are inclined to use the mistakes of elders as an excuse not to be subject. But that is not the right attitude.

Each authoritative source that is established by God must be acknowledged. That doesn't mean that they should be obeyed without consideration, but it means that there must be an attitude of subjection with those who are under this authority. The Lord Jesus subjected to His fallible earthly parents (Lk 2:51). It is an exercise for younger people to follow Him in this and to deal with the elders in subjection.



The enemy will do his utmost to cause a division between younger people and elders. He will try to cause them not to understand one another. But younger people and elders need each other. Elders have to serve younger men. When they do that, the younger men will want to be subject to them.

For both groups, this requires humility, to which all are now called. If you clothe yourself “with humility”, that is, if humility is your power of living, you will experience the blessing of it. He who is humble doesn’t pretend anything and due to that he will not encounter conflicts with someone else and definitely not with God. With Elihu you see a beautiful example of a younger man who takes the right place toward the older Job and his friends (Job 32:1-11).

However, if you oppose and try to fight for your own rights, God will oppose you. A spirit of pride is a direct attack on God’s right over man.

Now read 1 Peter 5:1-5 again.

Reflection: How do you as a young believer, look at older believers?

## 1Pet 5:6-14 | The God of All Grace

*6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 8 Be of sober [spirit], be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 But resist him, firm in [your] faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. 10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen [and] establish you. 11 To Him [be] dominion forever and ever. Amen. 12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard [him]), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and [so does] my son, Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.*

V6. In the test of your faith you can notice the powerful hand of God. Instead of resisting it, "humble yourself". That's what He is all about. Humiliation is the harbinger of exaltation, in the same way as pride goes before destruction (Pro 16:18).

Though, you ought not to humble yourself under the hand of men, but "under the mighty hand of God". If you're facing difficulties, even if those difficulties are caused by men, then it is still His hand that you feel. Behind the hand of men you may see the hand of God. Behind the humiliation you may see the exaltation that will be your portion at God's time. That will happen when the Lord Jesus comes. Then your position, with all believers, changes from that of a subject to that of a ruler.

V7. It doesn't mean that everything will be easy. Therefore God gives you a great encouragement: you are allowed to cast all your anxiety on Him (Psa 55:22). He will take over your whole burden. The only thing you've got to do is to cast that burden of anxiety on Him. If you have done that, you've got rid of it. He has taken it over and will take care of you further. If you keep on carrying this burden of anxiety yourself, you will be absorbed by it and you will not see God Who loves to care for you.

The fact that God cares for you means that He has great interest in each detail of your life. He not only wants to be involved, but He wants to take over your need. He brings you into tests and trials, so that you may learn to take it out of His hand and to put it into His hand (Psa 10:14a).

V8. With this view you have the privilege to accept all tests out of the mighty hand of God and to submit everything to Him that goes together with it. Nevertheless you should not neglect that the devil also plays his part. Trust in God doesn't mean that you have got rid of your responsibility and can therefore be passive. You always need to "be of sober [spirit]", therefore not naïvely think that you can do everything without being bothered by the devil. He certainly is a conquered enemy, but only for those who go their way in the confidence of faith in God. Keep your eyes widely opened for the dangers that surround you. Sleepiness and laziness are an invitation for the devil to attack you.

The devil is called "your adversary". With everything that is in him he is against you because you belong to the Lord Jesus. There is nothing in the devil that in any way can be beneficial to you. He "prowls around like a roaring lion", seeking for a prey. He is cruel, powerful and merciless. With his roaring he tries to frighten you. Make sure you do not get into his power. His only goal is to "devour" you, which means that he wants to completely destroy you.

V9. If he comes at you, don't be intimidated. Do not turn your back on him, but resist him. You must flee when he comes your way in the form of temptations to sin in case you encounter something that addresses your flesh to cause it to work. That regards to fornication, idolatry, money and the lusts of the youth (1Cor 6:18; 10:14; 1Tim 6:11; 2Tim 2:22). When the trial comes from the outside, when the devil wants to frighten you and wants to cause you to deny your faith, you must resist him. You should not avoid the suffering, but endure it, firm in the faith for the sake of the Lord, looking on Him in the confidence that He supports you.

You are not the only one who has to face this suffering. It is the experience of all "your brethren". They are all believers and not the limited circle of believers with whom you have contact regularly. The company of brethren is not a part of the world, but it finds itself in the midst of it. That company

and the world have nothing in common. The world may be very friendly at times, but as soon as it is confronted with the dominion of the Lord Jesus, their tolerance directly turns into threat and hatred. Then the world shows its true face and that is that it hates all of those who belong to that company of brethren and everything that is theirs.

V10. But there is a mighty fortress that repels all the attacks of the roaring lion. That fortress is “the God of all grace”. All believers know the God of all grace, meaning that God’s grace is experienced in all kinds and at all times. That also applies from the beginning to the end of your life and in all circumstances. All grace comes from God, in whatever way.

He has called you “to His eternal glory in Christ”. Your future is totally fixed in God’s plan. The future is His and you are His. Nothing and no one is able to make a change in God’s call. Who could that be? It must be something or someone who is stronger than God. Would you know who that could be? There is not even one to be compared with Him, not to mention that there would be something that could be above Him.

If He has called you for an amazing future connected to Christ, then you will also partake of it (Rom 8:30). Opposite to this is “a little while” of suffering. In that little while He is preparing you for that future with Christ.

1. The suffering serves to “perfect” you, meaning to bring you to perfection and fullness, so that nothing lacks you. There will be no lack or shortage of anything anymore.
2. He will also “confirm” you through the suffering, meaning he will make you stand steadfast.
3. Thereby He will inwardly “strengthen” you, so that there will be no weakness anymore.
4. Finally He gives you a firm foundation, on which He will “establish” you.

You see that God makes an end to all that is out of balance and that is weak. Instead, He gives a situation in which nothing can be changed anymore.

V11. This all will end up in His glorification. From the mouth of all the redeemed the praise will sound that ascribes to Him all dominion. There is no dominion beside Him. The proofs that He alone possesses it, are abun-

dantly delivered and seen in all the redeemed together. With an 'Amen' Peter concludes this praise. Each believer will wholeheartedly agree with that. That's how it is and there is nothing else.

V12. Peter still has some personal greetings. In order to deliver the letter to the readers, Peter gave it to Silvanus, after having possibly dictated it to him. Silvanus is the same as Silas, the journey companion of Paul. This Silas was familiar with suffering. He and Paul were scourged in Philippi and were thrown into prison (Acts 16:19-23). Maybe Peter knew that and he therefore asked him to take his letter with him. Peter must have known him, for Silas was a leader among the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22), where Peter also had served the believers.

To introduce Silas to the readers of his letter, he says that as for him, Silas is a faithful brother. He tells his readers what his impression of Silas is, without arrogating himself a definite judgement about the faithfulness of Silas. Peter is aware of his own unfaithfulness. That's what makes him careful. After all, the judgment about faithfulness is up to the Lord (1Cor 4:1-5; Mt 25:21,23).

He has written a brief letter, but its effect is great and long lasting. It is to make them understand what "the true grace of God" is. By that Peter says that grace is the true nature of Christendom, that it is based on grace and not on the law. In that grace they must stand firm and hold fast to and not be drawn away from it.

That also goes for you. By grace you are saved (Eph 2:8) and in grace you stand before God (Rom 5:2). That grace should characterize your life. If you have understood anything of what grace is, you will not be willing to place yourself under a law again or would want to participate in outwardly formal services. Grace means putting your whole life in God's hand and to be guided by Him.

V13. Peter also conveys the greetings of the "chosen together with" them. "She" possibly refers to his wife, whom he took with him on his journey (1Cor 9:5). He is writing from Babylon, where a large Jewish community existed and where he worked. After all he is the apostle of the circumcision (Gal 2:7). He also conveys the greetings of his son Mark, the evangelist. Mark is probably his spiritual son.

V14. Finally Peter gives them the order to assure one another of their love to one another by greeting each other with an intimate greeting.

While Paul often concludes his letters with a wish that they may experience the grace of the Lord Jesus, Peter wishes his readers “peace”. Peace is the great character of the kingdom over which the Lord Jesus will reign and which is therefore also called ‘the kingdom of peace’. Peace is also the great blessing for the believers in their dealings with one another. The enjoyment of that peace is only possible when each believer himself is aware of his position in Christ, is living up to it and also sees the other one in that position.

I wholeheartedly wish the same for you in your relationship with Christ and in your dealings with fellow believers. Amen.

Now read 1 Peter 5:7-14 again.

Reflection: Just explore how often God has already revealed Himself to you as the God of all grace.

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